

A large yellow pencil with a black eraser and a sharp lead tip, positioned horizontally across the middle of the page.

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

STRENGTHENING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

ADB

Strengthening Inclusive Education

Asian Development Bank

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECCE	early childhood care and education
EENET	Enabling Education Network
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	education management information system
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
GER	gross enrollment ratio
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GPI	gender parity index
IBE	International Bureau of Education
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NER	net enrollment rate
NGO	nongovernment organization
NNER	net non-enrollment rate
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPP	public–private partnership
PRC	People's Republic of China
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

Foreword

Focus on Education

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has long been providing financing and advisory assistance to its developing member countries (DMCs) for broadening and deepening delivery of education services. Under its new long-term strategic framework, or *Strategy 2020*, ADB reaffirms its commitment to stepping up education sector operations and contributing to further development of human capital and skilled labor force in the DMCs. ADB is keen to ensure the development effectiveness of all its operations and that the assistance provided must be relevant and responsive and must add value.

This series—Focus on Education—surveys important topics including education sector policy, financing, and service delivery; identifies key concerns; and distills practical insights. It is intended for practitioners in the education sector in Asia and the Pacific. It will draw on a wide range of sources, including materials on the experience of ADB's education sector operations, and specific studies conducted by ADB. The series is integral to ADB's efforts to support knowledge sharing and the implementation of *Strategy 2020* in the education sector. We hope that readers will find the series informative in their practice.



Xianbin Yao

Director General

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Preface

In developing countries, inequality in access to education begins in the preprimary and primary levels and, unfortunately, tends to be compounded at the secondary and higher levels. Invariably, children who are excluded from education—even in countries with high enrollments—are from the disadvantaged population groups.

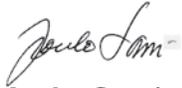
Physical inclusion in an education institution is important but not sufficient: being in a class is one thing, and learning is another. The focus should be on pedagogical inclusion, i.e., providing for all equal access to good quality education and learning opportunities. However, reaching the excluded calls for strategies quite different from a simple expansion of education systems. Systems must adapt to the circumstances of excluded groups.

Education systems that are inclusive support each individual to reach his or her full learning potential, thereby creating more inclusive and broad-based human resources in a society. Inclusiveness and equity throughout the education system are key factors for advancing economic growth, leading to greater recognition that educating excluded groups and raising their achievement is an economic imperative. Thus, support to inclusive education and inclusiveness of education systems is a high priority in the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) assistance strategies in the education sector.

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of inclusive education, and the definitions of and justifications for strengthening inclusive education. It helps to identify the various forms of exclusion from education. It highlights the patterns of exclusion in the education sector by subregions in Asia and the Pacific, and also by subsectors of education. The report provides detailed guidance on strengthening inclusive education, and discusses strategic and operational implications for ADB assistance arising from that priority.

The report supports ADB's education sector staff in their dialogue with governments and other stakeholders of education in developing member countries (DMCs). ADB staff can also use the report as a guide material when processing education projects in DMCs. In addition, we hope the report will be useful more widely for education ministries, institutions, and other stakeholders in the region.

Many thanks go to ADB education specialists for the comprehensive peer review of the draft report. Also, health and social development specialists contributed to the review. In addition, I am grateful for the efficient contribution of the following team members: Sheldon Shaeffer, consultant, prepared a draft for the peer review; Dorothy Geronimo and Shanti Jagannathan provided comments on the final draft; Stephen Banta edited the report for publication; and Imelda Marquez provided administrative support.



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Strengthening Inclusive Education

“Marginalization is not random. It is the product of institutionalized disadvantage—and of policies and processes that perpetuate such disadvantage.”¹

“Barriers [to education] can take many forms: the curriculum, the assessment system, lack of resources, etc., but the most difficult factor is the barriers that are within our mind.”²

“Inclusion is only in appearance. They let you in but they do not accept you.”³

¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). 2010a. *Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report 2010*. Paris. p. 135.

² UNESCO Bangkok. 2005. *Regional Workshop on Inclusive Education: Getting All Children into School and Helping Them Learn*. Bangkok. p. 37.

³ A Nicaraguan inclusive education advocate as quoted in Inclusion International. 2009. *Better Education for All: When We're Included Too—A Global Report*. Salamanca, Spain: Inclusion International. p. 78.

Introduction

The world seems to become more “exclusive” every day (Box 1). Social and economic disparities within and across countries and communities are increasing along with strife and violence within and across religions and cultures; the digital divide is a growing reality; food security is becoming more tenuous; and climate change is already exacerbating the gap between those who have access to water and arable land and those who do not.

Too often, unfortunately, education is seen as the panacea for these 21st century challenges. Better education, it is said, and more of it, will reduce poverty, promote democracy and social justice, reduce intolerance and conflict, spread the benefits of information and communication technologies, guarantee a sustainable future—and ensure that all of humankind is included in these achievements.

This is too simplistic, of course; education by itself cannot perform these miracles. But more and better education, if not sufficient to solve the world’s problems, is certainly necessary. And it becomes more powerful in this process to the extent that it is universally achieved—in other words, education for *all*, not education for *almost* all.

The fundamental problem in achieving this essential goal is satisfaction with what has already been achieved and a lack of high-level commitment to do more. To put it simply, ministers of education put too much emphasis on their system’s net enrollment rate (NER), especially where it has increased on their watch. Although often inaccurately defined and badly measured,⁴ the NER represents to them, their constituents, and their political masters a visible sign of achievement; getting close to an official enrollment rate of 95% or 98% (and not looking at other household-based data such as school attendance rates) is what they focus on. Satisfied with what has been achieved and indifferent to what has not, they are reluctant to discuss their system’s net *non*-enrollment rate (NNER)—a figure that would necessarily focus attention on those the system does not see, does not count, and does not serve. The calculation, analysis, and publicizing of the NNER—and the development of organizational cultures, policies, and programs to reduce it—are essentially what inclusive education is all about.

⁴ UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. p. 12. The report makes special note of the likely large overestimation of the NER in many countries when compared with household data concerning enrollment and regular attendance.

Box 1: Facts about Exclusion in Education

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics calculated that in 2006, 31% of primary school-age children in South and West Asia not in school were expected never to enroll in school, and another 64% had dropped out—9 million dropouts in India and Pakistan alone, half of the world's total.^a

The *Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report 2010 (GMR)* indicates that girls make up 58% of out-of-school children (primary school-age) in both Central Asia and South and West Asia, and that there remains one grade difference in the school life expectancy in favor of boys in South Asia.^b

The gap between the richest and the poorest 20% of the population in terms of number of years in education is 4.4 years in Bangladesh, 6.9 years in India, and 6.5 years in Pakistan. In the Philippines, “education poverty” rates among the poor are four times the national average.^c

In rural Pakistan, a recent survey found that only two-thirds of grade 3 students could subtract single-digit numbers. In rural India, just 28% of grade 3 students could subtract two-digit numbers and only a third could tell the time.^d

Literacy rates between native speakers of the national language and those with another first language show great disparities (94% for the Kinh in Viet Nam and 72% for minorities,^e and 90% of the Hmong ethnic group in Viet Nam are in the bottom 20% of the national distribution for years in school).^f

UNESCO estimated in 2006 that of the 77 million primary school-age children out of school in the world, at least 25 million had a disability,^g and a United Nations Children's Fund survey has shown that 21% of children 2–9 years old showed positive on at least one question related to disability in Bangladesh, 26% in Mongolia, and 15% in Thailand.^h

Thirteen percent of children aged 5–14 work in South Asia, 10% in Southeast and East Asia (excluding the People's Republic of China), and 45% in Cambodia,ⁱ and many more are street children, children of migrants and refugees, and children affected by natural disaster and conflict (14 million children aged 5–17 are displaced due to conflict).^j

^a UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2008. *A Typology of Out-of-School Children to Improve Policies that Address Exclusion*. Document ED/BIE/CONFINTED 48/Inf.4. Geneva: UNESCO International Bureau of Education.

^b UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. Paris. p. 314.

^c *Ibid.*, p. 23. The “education poverty” rate is a new GMR statistic indicating the percentage of young adults 17–22 with fewer than 4 years of education; “extreme education poverty” indicates fewer than 2 years of education. These statistics are included in the new GMR Deprivation and Marginalization data set.

^d *Ibid.*, p. 19.

^e *Ibid.*, p. 18.

^f *Ibid.*, p. 153.

^g UNESCO. 2006. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007*. Paris.

^h United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 2009b. *Progress for Children: A Report Card on Child Protection*. New York. p. 18.

ⁱ UNESCO. 2010a. p. 168.

^j *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Inclusive education: What is it?⁵

Few terms in education have as many varied meanings as “inclusive education;” the range in definitions reflects, among other things, historical trends, educational philosophies, and development agency agendas. The original focus of inclusive education was on education for “special needs”—the needs of learners with disabilities.⁶ This focus, promoted particularly by a variety of disability interest groups concerned with specific impairments (of sight, hearing, mobility, and emotional and cognitive functioning) and supported by a number of development agencies and international nongovernment organizations (NGOs), tried to ensure that the needs of such learners were recognized and responded to by the education system.

These needs, however, were usually neglected by “regular” schools of the official education system. Learners with special needs were considered too difficult to manage and too costly to support—and often parents of “normal” learners (and their teachers) did not want such learners disrupting the classroom. Such neglect usually led, where feasible, to the establishment of special institutions, often one set for each impairment. Many of these, in fact, were managed by ministries of health or social welfare rather than the ministry of education (which led, in some countries, to the exclusion of these learners from official education statistics—both the numerator and denominator of the NER), were poorly funded and inadequately staffed, and had only weak links to the formal education system and curriculum.

Exceptions were the strong support—both institutional and financial—to the science and practice of “defectology” in the socialist systems of Central, East, and Southeast Asia; and the support of some bilateral development agencies with strong traditions of special needs education in their home countries. The European Commission, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation,

⁵ Inclusive education clearly is relevant to nonformal and informal settings and modes of education in addition to the formal system of the school, but in this paper, most explicit references will relate to schools.

⁶ The World Health Organization has defined *impairment* as “an abnormality in the way organs or systems function,” *disability* as “the functional consequences of an impairment,” and *handicap* as “the social or environmental consequence of a disability” but generally, in terms of human rights and respect for difference and diversity, prefers to see disability not as an individual problem but as a “complex collection of conditions, many of which are created by the social environment.” Heijnen, E. 2005. What Is in a Name: Labels and Terminology Regarding Disability and Special Education Needs. *Enabling Education Network (EENET) Asia Newsletter*. Issue 1. p. 4.

and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, for example, all include a focus on disability issues in their education policies.⁷

Increasingly, however, the terms “mainstreaming” and “integration” became important mantras in the rhetoric about special needs.⁸ These approaches allowed children with disabilities into regular schools, sometimes with special assistance and/or separate classrooms for some subjects. These approaches became popular as a means to lower the perceived stigma, isolation, and expense of special institutions. But they also often led to children with disabilities being *physically* included in a classroom but *pedagogically* excluded from the learning that occurred within it; the children had to adapt to the school’s environment, curriculum, methods, values, and rules, or they failed.

As one report from Zambia states, “all children are allowed to go to the same school and attend classes with their fellow peers. However, being in class is one thing and learning is another.”⁹ This situation led to the concept of disability-focused “inclusive education”—ensuring that the education system and school adapt themselves to the learners rather than the other way around. This became the term of preference in regard to the fulfillment of the special needs of learners with disabilities.

But over time another “redefinition” occurred: a wider range of “special needs” was identified as obstacles to participation and to learning. It became clear to governments and development agencies alike that the expansion in the number of schools—and even the improvement of the quality of education they offered—was not going to attract a certain percentage of children who remained stubbornly out of the system or entered it and quickly left. Gender, health and nutrition status, language, geographic location, culture, religion, economic status—all, in different contexts, were clearly barriers to the achievement of Education for All (EFA). Broadening the definition of inclusion beyond disabilities to cover *all* barriers to education was therefore seen as a way to profoundly transform education systems and learning environments, get them to welcome and respond to difference and diversity, and genuinely achieve EFA.

The recommended definition, therefore, taken from the policy guidelines of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),

⁷ Inclusion International. 2009. *Better Education for All*. p. 43.

⁸ *Mainstreaming* allows children with disabilities to be placed in regular schools, but only if they can follow the mainstream curriculum academically. Mainstreaming occurs mostly for children suffering from illnesses that have no impact on cognitive abilities and for children with a sensory impairment (having the necessary assistive devices such as hearing aids or Braille books) and those who have only a physical impairment. Mainstreaming does not require teachers to adapt the curriculum or change their teaching methods. *Integration* means placing students with (whatever) impairments in classrooms with their peers without disabilities. In integrated schools and classrooms, such children often follow only the lessons that they *can* follow according to the teacher, and for many academic subjects these children may receive alternative lessons or remedial teaching in a separate classroom. Heijnen, E., Personal communication.

⁹ Inclusion International. 2009. *Better Education for All*. p. 81.

is as follows: “Inclusion is ... seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity in the needs of all children, youth, and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures, and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.”¹⁰

A somewhat more recent and applied definition, linking inclusive education to major educational themes, the democratization of learning opportunities, and lifelong learning was adopted at the 2008 International Conference on Education in Geneva, as follows: “a broadened concept of inclusive education can be viewed as a general guiding principle to strengthen education for sustainable development, lifelong learning for all, and equal access of all levels of society to learning opportunities.”¹¹

Thus, an inclusive system or school is not one that responds separately to the needs of discrete categories of learners (girls with one program, children with disabilities with another) but rather one that responds, through its curriculum, pedagogical strategies, physical facilities, and special services, to the diverse, specific, and unique characteristics of each learner, especially those at risk of marginalization and underachievement. In reality, of course, this is also a good general definition for education of good quality.¹²

The relationship between “special needs” and “regular schools” was best spelled out at the World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994. The resulting statement declared: “special needs education ... has to form part of an overall educational strategy and, indeed, of new social and economic policies. It calls for major reform of the ordinary school.”¹³ Thus, “regular schools with [an] inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.”¹⁴ In other words, “this means that education systems must be willing and able to welcome students, regardless of their disability, and

¹⁰ UNESCO. 2009. *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education*. Paris. pp. 8–9.

¹¹ UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE). 2008b. *Conclusions and Recommendations. 2008 International Conference on Education*. Geneva. IBE’s preparation for and follow-up to the international conference, in cooperation with UNESCO in Paris and its regional bureaus for education, resulted in very important and detailed documentation on the evolving definition of, and good practices in, inclusive education.

¹² Another definitional issue concerns the use of terms such as “exclusion,” “marginalization” (the term used in the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*), the “hard-to-reach,” the “disadvantaged,” etc. They all have somewhat different connotations, but exclusion/inclusion is used here, given its utility in describing learners excluded both from schooling and, in school, from learning.

¹³ UNESCO. 1994. *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. Paris. pp. iii–iv.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

provide them with the supports they need, with the default always a regular class with nondisabled peers.”¹⁵

In summary, an inclusive approach to education

- insists on getting *all* children and youth into regular public schools and mainstream systems or private systems of (at least) equal quality—and *all* illiterate adults into literacy programs;
- is concerned with not only initial enrollment, regular participation, and grade promotion but also longer-term achievement through the quality of education provided; access to education of poor quality is not access;
- requires both an analysis of the causes or drivers of exclusion and the proactive searching for, and targeted support to, those excluded;
- implies the restructuring of school cultures, policies, and practices to meet the diversity of students; and
- above all, is not an outcome, ever perfectly achieved, but rather a process, always “in process.”

“An inclusive school is one that is on the move, rather than one that has reached a perfect state. Inclusion, therefore, is a process requiring ongoing vigilance.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Inclusion International. 2009. *Better Education for All*. p. 24.

¹⁶ Ainscow, M., and S. Miles. 2008. *Making Education for All Inclusive: Where Next? Prospects*. 38(1). Geneva: UNESCO IBE. p. 20.

Inclusive education: Why do it?

Reducing the NNER and achieving the EFA goals—making at least basic education genuinely inclusive—are difficult, relatively expensive, and time-consuming tasks (but then so is achieving quality teaching and learning), and requires the utmost of individual commitment and institutional reform. So why do it then, especially when there are so many other demands on an education ministry's budget? There are several answers to this question.

To improve the efficiency and cost-benefit of education systems

It seems counterintuitive that inclusive education, which targets those most difficult (and often most expensive) to reach, can actually help reduce the budgets of ministries of education, especially in the long run. But schools that include children with some kinds of disability, even with the provision of special assistance, can be less costly than a network of special schools for special needs (with their additional costs for infrastructure, administration, staffing, etc.). An Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study in 1994 found that “including children with disabilities in regular classrooms is seven to nine times less costly than maintaining a separate system.”¹⁷

With their focus on marginal, disadvantaged, and at-risk learners, inclusive schools also lead to less wastage through the inefficiencies of large numbers of children repeating grades or dropping out entirely; learners enter the system at the mandated age and get through the system more quickly and more successfully. In addition, many approaches to inclusive education—multigrade and multi-age teaching, peer teaching, initial literacy in the mother tongue, and conversion of special schools into resource centers to help regular schools—are either less expensive from the outset (e.g., multigrade teaching requires fewer teachers than small but complete schools with a surplus of teachers) or can save money in the long run (e.g., the initial investment in developing bilingual education programs or early childhood care and education [ECCE] programs can be recovered through later efficiency increases in the system; see Box 2).

¹⁷ Inclusion International. 2009. *Better Education for All*. p. 41.

Box 2: Cost Savings from Bilingual Education in Guatemala

According to a study done originally for the World Bank, “bilingual education is an efficient public investment.” A crude cost–benefit exercise indicated that “a shift to bilingual schooling in Guatemala would result in considerable cost savings because of reduced repetition. The higher quality of education generating higher promotion rates will probably help students to complete the primary education cycle and will substantially increase total educational levels at lower cost. The cost savings due to bilingual education is estimated at over 31 million quetzales (\$5 million). The cost savings are [sic] equivalent to the cost of providing primary education to about 100,000 students per year. A reduction in dropout and the effect on personal earnings is estimated as an increase in individual earnings of an average amount of 186 quetzales.”^a

^a Patrinos, H.A., and E.Velez. 2009. Costs and Benefits of Bilingual Education in Guatemala: A Partial Analysis. *International Journal of Educational Development* 29 (6). p. 597.

To promote economic, social, and political development

If we accept the assumption that more and better education leads to greater individual and social development, then investments and reforms toward more inclusive education—getting all citizens educated, to a higher level of quality—will lead to a broader and stronger human resource base, able to participate more actively, more effectively, more responsibly, and more democratically—and with greater equity of outcomes—in the development process. This will lead not only to more poverty reduction and more “inclusive” growth but also to the more effective and efficient use of development resources and, in the long run, to cost savings, especially in the social development sectors such as health and social welfare.

A recent OECD study of countries participating in its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) discusses “the high cost of low educational performance” and the long-term economic impact of improving PISA outcomes. It concludes that “relatively small improvements in the skills of a nation’s labor force can have very large impacts on future well-being. Moreover, the gains, put in terms of current gross domestic product, far outstrip today’s value of the short-run business-cycle management.”¹⁸ The study continues: “higher cognitive skills offer a path of continued economic improvement, so that favorable policies today have growing impacts in the future. The underlying idea is that economies with more human capital (measured by cognitive skills) innovate at a higher rate than those with less human capital, implying that nations with larger human capital in their workers keep seeing more productivity gains.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2010. *The High Cost of Low Educational Performance*. Paris. p. 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

In Asia in particular, as it recovers from the ongoing global recession, there is a need to “rebalance economic growth” and therefore transform economies from being export dependent to being more self-sufficient. Education must play an important role in providing the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes required in such rebalancing, especially in ensuring that the most marginalized population groups are not further excluded from economic development in this process.²⁰

In addition, reaping the economic and political benefits (and resisting the negative effects) of globalization across a population can be achieved only if all individuals in a society have the opportunity to pursue education to their fullest potential. Failing to do this, especially in regard to the technological demands of new knowledge and information societies, will only increase further the already increasing disparities between the rich and the poor—and the connected and not connected—found within and across nations around the world.

To promote social cohesion and inclusion

An increasingly important function of education is to teach learners better how to live together. This implies tolerance of diversity and pluralism (including affirming one’s own identity rather than negating it) and the promotion of mutual understanding, cooperation, and solidarity. As the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education has written, “segregation teaches children to be fearful, ignorant, and breeds prejudice. All children need an education that will help them develop relationships and prepare them for life in the mainstream. Only inclusion has the potential to reduce fear and to build friendship, respect, and understanding”²¹—in the classroom and in the larger society. So inclusive schools are expected to be able to change attitudes toward diversity by educating all children together, in an inclusive manner, thus forming the basis for a just and nondiscriminatory society.²² It can be argued, in fact, that inclusive schools do much more than “tolerate” diversity—they welcome it, celebrate it, and see it not as a problem to be solved but as an opportunity to be used to provide education of better quality.

Thus, participation and nondiscrimination are important aspects of rights-based education, which can take the lead in changing passive, teacher-centered schools into child-centered and interactive ones. Within the learning environment, children must be able to express their thoughts and ideas, to participate fully, and to feel comfortable about who they are and where they come from. Giving children a say in matters that affect them improves standards, behavior, and inclusion while recognizing that social and emotional learning are as important

²⁰ Asian Development Bank (ADB). 2009a. *Asian Development Outlook 2009*. Manila.

²¹ Watterdal, T., et al., eds. 2006. *Compendium—Agreements, Laws, and Regulations Guaranteeing All Children Equal Right to Quality Education in an Inclusive Setting*. Jakarta: UNESCO and Plan Indonesia. p. 7.

²² UNESCO. 2009. *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education*. p. 9.

as academic learning. Children need to build knowledge and understanding of issues such as social justice, human rights, and sustainable development. This way, education can also create the basis for a democratic and just society.²³

To fulfill internationally mandated goals

The two major education declarations of Jomtien in 1990 and Dakar in 2000—although not binding on governments—made clear the same obligation. In Jomtien, the participants declared that “consistent measures must be taken to reduce disparities” and called for active commitment to reach underserved groups, including the poor; remote rural populations; ethnic, racial, and linguistic minorities; refugees and migrants; and those affected by conflict. The Dakar Framework for Action reaffirmed the commitment “to explicitly identify, target, and respond flexibly to the needs and circumstances of the poorest and the most marginalized.”²⁴

Thus, EFA Goal 2 (ensuring that all children have access to and can complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality) and Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 (ensuring universal primary education), endorsed by virtually all countries of the world, have as their primary purpose the achievement of universal basic education (however defined nationally)—getting *all* children into schools of good quality. Inclusive education therefore becomes the core of EFA—a guiding principle to transform educational systems from vision to practices to achieve the EFA goals and the MDGs.

To realize a human right

Last but not least, and arguably the most fundamental rationale for inclusion, is the universal right of all individuals to education (however defined as basic, fundamental, primary, etc.).²⁵ A wide range of international conventions and declarations, some binding on governments and some not, have proclaimed this right, as follows:

- the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, Article 26—“everyone has the right to education;”²⁶ and
- the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, Article 28—“every child has a right to education” without discrimination;²⁷

²³ Heijnen, E. Personal communication.

²⁴ Quoted in UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*.

²⁵ See, for example, Tomasevski, K. 2004. *Manual on Rights-based Education: Global Human Rights Requirements Made Simple*. Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok.

²⁶ United Nations (UN). 1948. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Article 26. Available: www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a26

²⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR). 1989. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Article 28. Available: www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm#art28

with more specific ones as follows:

- the **Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action**, paragraph 3—“schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions;”²⁸
- the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women**, Article 10—“Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education;”²⁹
- the **Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities**, Article 24—“Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels, and lifelong learning;”³⁰ and
- the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**, Article 14—“indigenous individuals, especially children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State, without discrimination ... where possible ... in their own culture and provided in their own language.”³¹

These documents all make clear the obligation that a large range of duty-bearers—from the minister of education to teachers and parents—have to realize the rights of all to education. This means essentially that (at least) primary education, as a public responsibility, should be provided free.

Thus, to work from a rights perspective has far-reaching implications for education development. It necessarily entails values, knowledge, and skills that revolve around the basic principles of nondiscrimination, protection, and participation. Education that is inclusive actualizes the *right* to nondiscrimination. It is based on a rights and responsibilities analysis showing that national education systems are responsible for all children and therefore need to be flexible and responsive.

“By applying a rights-based approach towards achieving an inclusive education system, the process puts emphasis on those who are most marginalized and vulnerable, thus identifying those who are still excluded. It also leads to the identification of the underlying causes of exclusion and helps redress unequal power relations based on factors such as poverty and social injustice.”³²

²⁸ UNESCO. 1994. *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. Paris. Available: www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF

²⁹ UN. 1979. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*. Available: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article10

³⁰ OHCHR. 2006. *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability*. Available: www2.ohchr.org/english/law/disabilities-convention.htm#24

³¹ UN. 2007. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Available: www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/drip.html

³² Shaeffer, S. 2008. *Realizing Inclusive Education through Applying a Rights-based Approach to Education*. ED/BIE/ CONFINTED 48/Inf.2. Geneva: UNESCO IBE. p. 29.

Inclusive education: For whom and how many?

Patterns of exclusion

The definition used here and the wide range of reasons for “doing” inclusive education lead logically to the question “for whom?” The answer is, in general, for *all* excluded learners, from ECCE programs through the formal school system to tertiary, adult, and continuing education. These include the following:

- **Those completely excluded from school.** These are the children who have never enrolled in primary school because of where they are (in slums, remote areas, or refugee camps); how they live (in poverty, with the costs of schooling too high); and/or who they are (their disability, gender, or ethnicity disqualifies them; or their family, religion, or culture rejects schooling e.g., no education for girls). The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) calculates that in 2006, 31% of primary school-age children in South and West Asia who were not in school were expected never to enroll in school, and another 64% had dropped out—9 million dropouts in India and Pakistan alone, half of the world’s total. The comparable figures for East Asia and the Pacific were 13% never to enroll and 11% to drop out—with 76% enrolling late.³³ (Note that the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010 [GMR]* suggests that evidence from household surveys shows that official data may understate the number of out-of-school children by up to 30%!)³⁴
- **Those once in school but who dropped out or were “pushed out.”** These participated in school; they enrolled but then dropped out or, more often, were pushed out by the nature of the school itself—a language they could not understand, irrelevant curricula, difficulties in gaining initial literacy, increasing fees, etc.
- **Those enrolled in school but not learning.** These potential learners sit in the classroom (and are counted as enrolled) but do not learn because of their individual or group characteristics (e.g., girls not called on by the teacher, children with disabilities who are ignored, learners who do not understand the language of the teacher), because

³³ UIS. 2008a. *A Typology of Out-of-School Children to Improve Policies that Address Exclusion*. Document. ED/BIE/ CONFINTED 48/Inf. 4. Geneva: UNESCO IBE.

³⁴ UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. p. 12.

teachers cannot adequately respond to their more individual learning needs, or because of the low quality of education provided.

There are two important issues in this regard: One is the problem of multiple exclusion. “Poverty, gender, ethnicity and other characteristics interact to create overlapping and self-reinforcing layers of disadvantage that limit opportunity and hamper social mobility.”³⁵ A girl from a poor family, with a disability, from an ethnic minority, and living in a remote area will be much more difficult—and costly—to include in school than her opposite—thus the need for ministers of education to realize that their obligation to fulfill the right of both to education is equal. Concretely: “Being a girl in the Cambodia hill provinces of Mondol Kiri and Rattanak Kiri increases the risk of not being in school by a factor of five. Three-quarters of the group have fewer than 2 years in school, compared with a national average of 12%.”³⁶

A second important issue in any discussion of who is excluded is where the blame lies for such exclusion. Ask the average mid-level ministry of education official why children do not enroll in—or why they drop out of—school, and the first several answers will often “blame the victim”—the children themselves or their parents. Only when pushed, perhaps, will officials begin to consider how the system itself might be to blame—an irrelevant curriculum, a language the learners do not understand, absent teachers, or formal and informal school fees. (A recent survey of primary schools showed that between 20% and 37% of pupils in the Philippines had teachers who “to some extent” or “a lot” arrived late, were absent, or skipped classes.)³⁷ Such a “plague of blame” has obvious implications for how a ministry responds to and programs for excluded learners. Understanding that the ministry itself shares the blame for exclusion may lead to very different programmatic and financial responses.

In summary, children are excluded from education—or exclude themselves—for many reasons. A study in Indonesia revealed “poverty combined with dysfunctional communities, dysfunctional families, and dysfunctional schools that threaten, abuse, and disable young people to the point where they decide that the most appropriate choice in all their complex circumstances is to leave school.”³⁸ And the opportunities outside of education may seem better than those inside. Adopting a policy of inclusive education “requires a move away from explanations of educational failure that concentrate [only] on the characteristics of individual children and their families, towards an analysis of the barriers to participation and learning experiences by students with education systems.”³⁹

³⁵ Ibid., p. 136.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 152.

³⁷ UIS. 2008b. *A View Inside Primary Schools: A World Education Indicators (WEI) Cross-National Study*. Montreal. p. 234.

³⁸ Cannon, R., and R. Arlianti. 2007. *Transition to and Participation in Junior Secondary School*. Jakarta: United States Agency for International Development. p. 5.

³⁹ Ainscow, M., and S. Miles. 2008. *Making Education for All Inclusive: Where Next?*

Specific groups of interest

Specifically, the following groups will be considered:

- **Girls and women.** Traditionally disadvantaged in most systems of education around the world—despite progress over the last 2 decades since Jomtien—girls and women remain an important excluded group. The EFA GMR 2010 indicates that girls make up 58% of out-of-school children (primary school-age) in both Central Asia and South and West Asia, and that there remains one grade difference in the school life expectancy in favor of boys in South Asia.⁴⁰ Rates of youth illiteracy also show gender disparities in South and West Asia (10%) and of adult illiteracy in the same region (22%) and in East Asia (5%).⁴¹ Even girls who are in school are often excluded from learning—less is expected of them by their teachers, questions are directed to them less often, and they are counseled towards less professional futures. Special programs can make a difference, of course, especially the range of NGO-sponsored education systems in South Asia such as that of BRAC⁴² (Box 3).
- **The poor.** The poor (especially those in what is usually called “extreme poverty”) are both rural and, following internal migration patterns, increasingly urban. They live on less than \$1 a day (and there are almost 650 million of them in Asia and the Pacific⁴³), are landless and unemployed or work as day laborers or small vendors, and have little access to adequate social services. They also often belong to low social castes, adding to the weight of their exclusion. And they are often getting poorer. In 2000, the poverty rate among non-Kinh ethnic minority groups in Viet Nam was two and a half times higher than that of the majority Kin; by 2006, it was five times higher.⁴⁴

As a result, the children of the poor suffer. In the Philippines, for example, “education poverty” rates among the poor are four times the national average.⁴⁵ And in India, the richest 20% attain over 11 years of schooling, while the poorest 20% receive only 4 years.⁴⁶ As example, over 10% of primary school principals in the Philippines and Sri Lanka report that most or all of their pupils come to school without having eaten breakfast or lunch.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. p. 314.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Originally the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, now simply BRAC.

⁴³ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). 2008. *A Future Within Reach 2008: Regional Partnerships for the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific. Asia-Pacific MDG Study Series*. Bangkok.

⁴⁴ Baulch, B., et al. 2009. *Ethnic Minority Poverty in Vietnam*. Background paper for Country Social Analysis: Ethnicity and Development in Vietnam. Washington, DC: World Bank. (Discussion draft). Quoted in UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. p. 171.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 142.

⁴⁷ UIS. 2008b. *A View Inside Primary Schools*. p. 245.

Box 3: A Successful Special Program for Inclusion

BRAC is one of many, often quite large, NGO-run programs designed to work not only in education but also in a wide range of rural development activities. BRAC is present in all 64 districts of Bangladesh, with over 7 million microfinance group members, thousands of nonformal schools, and more than 70,000 health volunteers. Its particular focus has been on basic education, poverty reduction, and gender equality. The organization is 80% self-funded through a number of commercial enterprises. BRAC's nonformal primary education program provides a 5-year-equivalent primary education course in 4 years to poor, rural, disadvantaged children and dropouts who cannot access formal schooling. These one-room schools are for children between 8 and 14 years of age. Each school typically consists of 33 students and one teacher. Core subjects include mathematics, social studies, and English. The schools also offer extracurricular activities. As of June 2008, 37,500 primary schools and 24,750 preprimary schools had been established by BRAC in Bangladesh enrolling nearly 3 million children, 65% of whom were girls. The schools have a dropout rate of less than 5%.^a BRAC has expanded beyond Bangladesh and currently operates various programs in microfinance and education in about nine countries across Asia and Africa, reaching more than 110 million people.

BRAC = Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, NGO = nongovernment organization.

^a BRAC. 2006. *BRAC at a Glance*. Dhaka, Bangladesh.

A special and increasingly significant category of the poor comprises those who live in slums. One-third of all urban dwellers in the world now live in slums, and the absolute poverty of many slum residents is complicated by their frequent lack of formal residence status and birth certificates for their children; the children, in this sense, are invisible to the education system.

- **People living in rural and remote areas.** A particularly difficult group to reach with social services of any kind comprises people living in rural and remote areas—small villages on mountaintops and in the deep jungle, people living on isolated islands, and nomadic desert tribes. Where schools exist, they are usually poorly resourced in terms of infrastructure, teachers, and learning materials—with predictable results. “In rural Pakistan, a recent survey found that only two-thirds of third grade students could subtract single-digit numbers. In rural India, just 28% of grade 3 students could subtract two-digit numbers and only a third could tell the time.”⁴⁸ Even children in less remote places often have difficulty accessing a school. For example, the percentage of surveyed primary school principals in a UIS study who reported that all or most of their pupils needed to walk more than 5 kilometers or travel more than 1 hour to school was 6.5% in Malaysia, 8.0% in the Philippines, and 18.3% in Sri Lanka.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. p. 19.

⁴⁹ UIS. 2008b. *A View Inside Primary Schools*. p. 245.

- **Ethnic and linguistic minorities.** In the same study, 62.7% of school heads surveyed in the Philippines reported that the first language of *all* of their students was different from the language of instruction.⁵⁰ This figure is not unexpected in a region (Asia and the Pacific) with 3,572 languages⁵¹ and only 50 official and national languages! As a consequence, literacy rates between native speakers of the national language and those of other languages show great disparities (94% for the Kinh in Viet Nam and 72% for minorities,⁵² and 90% of the Hmong ethnic group are in the bottom 20% of the national distribution for years in school⁵³). The great diversity of languages in many countries does present many educational problems, of course—the lack of orthographies, books and materials, teachers, etc.—but the underlying cultural and political issues surrounding language and ethnicity make these groups particularly difficult to “include.”
- **People with disabilities.** A commonly accepted figure is that there are approximately 150 million children with disabilities in the world;⁵⁴ UNESCO estimated in 2006 that of the 77 million primary school-age children out of school in the world, at least 25 million of them had a disability,⁵⁵ and a United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) survey found that 26% of children 2–9 years old showed positive on at least one question related to disability in Mongolia, 21% in Bangladesh, and 15% in Thailand.⁵⁶ But depending on the definition of, and criteria for, disability used, the percentage of a given population with some kind of disability (or multiple disabilities) varies widely from survey to survey—one problem being, of course, the invisibility of many people with disabilities from formal survey methods. Somewhat less problematic, however, are estimates of the percentage of children with disabilities who are in school—special or regular. The numbers are generally very low. And many children in school, although perhaps not classified as disabled, also have learning difficulties; 16.9% of surveyed school heads in the Philippines reported that most or all of their students had learning problems that required special attention.⁵⁷
- **Others.** The categories of other excluded populations are legion—including people in prisons and orphans—but the most significant “other” excluded groups are child workers (13% of children aged 5–14 work in South Asia, 10% in Southeast and East Asia excluding the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 226.

⁵¹ Lewis, M.P., ed. 2009. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Sixteenth edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International.

⁵² UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. p. 18.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 153.

⁵⁴ World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). 2008. *World Report on Child Injury Prevention*. Geneva:WHO/UNICEF.

⁵⁵ UNESCO. 2006. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007*. Paris.

⁵⁶ UNICEF. 2009b. *Progress for Children: A Report Card on Child Protection*. New York. p. 18.

⁵⁷ UIS. 2008b. *A View Inside Primary Schools*. p. 245.

People's Republic of China, and 45% in Cambodia⁵⁸); street children; children of migrants and refugees; and children affected by natural disasters, conflicts (14 million children aged 5–17 are displaced due to conflict⁵⁹), and HIV/AIDS. The economic motivation for migration, the political causes of seeking refuge, and the incidence of natural and human-caused disasters will likely only increase in the future. And the refusal of education systems, schools, and the communities that surround them to allow children infected with HIV or only affected, through their families, by the presence of AIDS does not go away.

Exclusion by subregion and by level and kind of education

Across the subregions, of course, there are the same groups excluded from schooling—learners with disabilities, girls and women, street and working children, the extremely poor and those living in urban slums, and learners from minority ethnic/linguistic/religious groups, living in remote and conflict- and disaster-affected areas, and from refugee and migrant families, many of whom are undocumented and stateless. Added to these groups are those more specific to particular subregions: “problem children” and children from “problem families” in Central Asia; learners from lower castes and tribal groups in South Asia; populations on remote islands in the Pacific; children affected by HIV/AIDS in countries where this remains a major stigma; and, in an increasing number of countries, boys, due both to economic reasons (they earn needed money for their families outside of school) and to what is seen as the increasing feminization of education.

Many members of these same groups, of course, get into school but then do not learn. Thus, in terms of quality, almost everywhere are found persistent and even increasing disparities between urban and rural areas, between the rich and the poor, and between private, elite schools and often poor-quality, community-based or for-profit schools for the poor—with a large public system, often of dubious quality, serving the majority of learners. This leads to high repetition and dropout rates, low completion rates, and, ultimately, poor achievement and therefore continuing exclusion from further learning and from broader social and economic development.

The nature of exclusion—whom it affects most, under what circumstances, and for what reasons—differs considerably across the various subregions of Asia and the Pacific. These are explained in some detail in the Annex.

⁵⁸ UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. p. 168.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Education levels

The nature and extent of exclusion also differ by the level of education considered.

Early childhood care and education

Those young children who need to benefit most from the inclusive nature and function of ECCE usually benefit least. Although ECCE programs are expanding around the world—both center-based day care for children aged 0–3 and preschools and kindergartens for those aged 3–6—they remain largely urban (e.g., over a 20% disparity favoring urban areas in the attendance of children aged 3–4 in care and learning programs in Mongolia, Myanmar, and Viet Nam) and elite (e.g., over a 20% disparity in attendance between the rich and the poor in Mongolia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam);⁶⁰ they seldom penetrate to the urban slum dwellers and rural poor, who need them most. The gross enrollment ratio (GER) for preprimary education is 47% in East Asia, 28% in Central Asia, and 36% in South and West Asia,⁶¹ meaning that large numbers of young children lack any preschool experience and therefore any preparation for—and an easy transition to—formal primary school.

But even where preschools do exist, they often exacerbate exclusion rather than reduce it. This happens in two ways: First, they often do not help those who need help the most and who would benefit most from the experience. This includes the poor, of course, but also children with special needs. In a survey by Inclusion International, almost 40% of respondents said that ECCE programs were not preparing children with an intellectual disability for transition to primary school.⁶² Thus, these programs often help most the already “included” rather than the excluded.

Second, the increasing formality of many preschool programs, starting with private, elite, urban kindergartens but now penetrating down to the public preschools of the ambitious middle class—often with examinations required to enter them—may only increase the gap between the quality of services provided to the poor and to the rich.

Primary education

Despite the general progress in primary education in the region, largely as a result of the efforts made since Dakar, many children of the most excluded population groups still never enter primary school; the UIS data quoted above show that 13% of children in East Asia and the Pacific fail to do so. One reason

⁶⁰ UNESCO. 2006. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007*. p. 142.

⁶¹ UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. p. 418.

⁶² Inclusion International. 2009. *Better Education for All*. p. 56.

for this is that many teachers and schools do not actively seek out children not enrolled; they prefer homogeneity in their classrooms and so do little to look for and enroll children who are overage, speak a different language, have disabilities, or are poor. Despite this, net intake rates are increasing in virtually all countries of the region.

The problem is more one of repetition and dropout, with 5.5% of boys repeating across all grades in South and West Asia (compared with 3.7% for girls),⁶³ and, partly as a result of this repetition rate, a survival rate to the last grade of only 68%. The dropout rate in grade I is especially high—over 13%. Such an early high dropout rate indicates both the children's lack of readiness for school (e.g., no experience in ECCE programs) and the schools' lack of readiness for the children (e.g., a child-unfriendly environment, instruction not in the mother tongue). The nature of the early grades of primary school is especially problematic for learners at risk of later exclusion; their classes are often the largest, their teachers often the least experienced, and their hours of instruction often fewer than for pupils in higher grades. These factors then lead to weak initial literacy (especially if the language of this literacy is not the language of the learners), repetition, and then dropout.

But excluding children from school takes place throughout the primary cycle. Children continue to repeat and drop out, with often another peak in the dropout rate near the end of the cycle when they are old enough to work and help their families, or they begin to fail examinations leading to the end of primary school. They drop out in discouragement, convinced of the irrelevance of what they are learning, or are pushed out by teachers wanting good results in the final examination. In fact, many of the exclusionary processes of primary school are the result of “pushing out” rather than “dropping out,” as teachers and schools try to avoid more challenging students and large classes in the later grades of primary school. An excellent analysis of this process has been made by Helen Abadzi of the World Bank (Box 4).

Secondary education

Although GERs for academic secondary education increased dramatically in most of the region between 1999 and 2007—over 10% in all subregions except the Pacific and South and West Asia—barriers to entry to this level of education remain forbidding to many traditionally excluded groups. The NER for South and West Asia increased only 7%, with a final NER of only 46% compared with over 70% in the rest of the region—and this region had the lowest gender parity index (GPI) of 0.86. (The GPI for East Asia was 1.02, demonstrating the relative and increasing disadvantage for boys in secondary education.⁶⁴)

⁶³ UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. p. 354.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

Box 4: Pushing Out

“Many problems compromise the likelihood that the excluded populations will acquire the expected knowledge. These include malnutrition, poor mother tongue vocabulary, little knowledge of the official language (where applicable), poorly developed math sense, parents who are illiterate or lack time to monitor homework. Children with such problems may fall behind on the first day of grade 1.

“Crowded classes in low-income areas may teach very little to children from excluded groups. Materials may be scarce, and teachers may be overwhelmed with the high enrollments... To deal with these problems, teachers in low-income schools may do ‘triage,’ that is, identify those few who can keep up with the curriculum and focus on them. Weak students may be isolated in favor of those likely to pass high-stakes examinations...

“Some countries expect non-performing students to repeat grades, but others have instituted social promotion policies in order to reduce dropout and repetition. However, there is often no provision for remedial classes, so those falling behind are unlikely to catch up. Teachers of later primary or secondary grades find it impossible to implement the curriculum with such students. The class goes on, but with just 3–4 students who can handle the material. The rest may come to school off and on and gradually drop out.

“As a result, enrollment statistics in some low-income countries may be misleading. *The classes may have 20 or 100 students enrolled, but in fact the class size may be only 4. And of the rest, only half the students may come on a given day.*”^a (Italics in original)

^a Abadzi, H. 2009. Inclusive Education: Challenges of Implementing it Inside the Classroom. *Defining an Inclusive Education Agenda: Reflections around the 48th session of the International Conference on Education*. Geneva: UNESCO International Bureau of Education. pp. 109–110.

Enrollment rates are also, as expected, generally lower—often considerably lower—in the whole range of excluded population groups discussed above. Learners with disabilities rarely make the transition to even less disability-friendly secondary schools. Such schools are simply not found in rural and remote areas, are increasingly expensive for the poor, and demand even greater mastery of the national language.

One emerging issue deserves special attention: the proliferation of private, for-profit, non-elite, low-quality schools available to the aspiring lower and middle classes where parents, for one reason or another, feel that the formal government system does not offer what their children need. Parents are often led to believe that such schools are of almost international quality, with English said to be the medium of instruction. But the schools do not do what the parents hope, and so their children, often only after considerable expense, are both excluded from the advantages of the formal system and do not get what they need from the private system.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

Given existing global economic challenges and regional economic trends, TVET has become an increasingly important (and often contentious) issue among education planners, particularly in the continuing debate over the proper mix of academic and TVET content at the secondary level. But TVET is often not popular either with governments, resulting in an underfinanced, second-class subsystem, or with parents and students. In South and West Asia, for example, only 2% of secondary students opt for such education,⁶⁵ and only 27% of these are girls.⁶⁶

The problem, of course, is that many children from more excluded groups end up in this underfinanced, poor-quality subsystem, thereby increasing their disadvantage. Few public TVET systems focus on skill building for learners with disabilities or provide adequately flexible programs for children outside of the formal system (e.g., street children and working children) or those living in more remote and rural areas. In fact, a recent Asian Development Bank (ADB) publication admits that, “rural areas are difficult to serve. The answer is not to spread TVET enterprises evenly geographically if these are to serve modern-sector enterprises” but rather to provide residential facilities for remote and disadvantage students.⁶⁷

Higher education

Tertiary education enrollments have expanded dramatically in Asia and the Pacific, with a twelve-fold increase in student numbers in East Asia from 1970 to 2007 (to 46.7 million) and a GER in 2007 of 26%, and a six-fold increase in South and West Asia (to 18.5 million) but a GER of only 11% in 2007. Only the South and West Asia had a GPI less than 1.⁶⁸

This level, of course, is the most exclusionary of any system; relatively few members of excluded groups (especially, for example, learners with disabilities; learners from remote regions; and, in some countries, girls) complete secondary education, which is needed to apply for higher education. Those who might be eligible often find the financial burden difficult to overcome. Not enough systems and institutions have mechanisms to seek out and affirmatively act to enroll students from underrepresented groups.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 370.

⁶⁷ ADB. 2009a. *Good Practice in Technical and Vocational Education and Training*. Manila. p. 23.

⁶⁸ UIS. 2009. *Global Education Digest 2009: Comparing Education Statistics around the World*. Montreal. p. 10.

Adult education, literacy, and lifelong learning

Literacy rates, too, have increased across the region. But still 20% of people over 15 are illiterate, with a 10% gap between men and women; 60% of the illiterates in South and West Asia, for example, are women.⁶⁹ Over half of the world's total illiterates are found in just four countries of the region: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan.⁷⁰ And the gaps are huge—in India, from almost 0% illiterate in Mizoram to 50% in Rajasthan; in Pakistan, where the rural illiteracy rate is twice that of the urban rate; and in Bangladesh, where the literacy rate for the richest is 76% and for the poorest, 28%.⁷¹ The gap between speakers of the national (and therefore usually tested) language and those with different mother tongues is especially large. It is likely, of course, that there are many more illiterates in the region than reported, given the inaccuracy of many literacy statistics, which are based mainly on self-reporting or a proxy of 4 years of primary school rather than on actual performance.

⁶⁹ UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. p. 314.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Inclusive education: How to do it?

The need to “restructure” education systems, policies, and strategies

It should be clear by now that “failure to address inequalities, stigmatization, and discrimination linked to wealth, gender, ethnicity, language, location, and disability is holding back progress towards Education for All.”⁷² Addressing these issues requires a strong commitment to—and more financial resources for—an education that is inclusive of, and responsive to, all learners.

But inclusive education represents not merely the tinkering with an education system—a few adjustments at the margins. Rather, its focus is on the “transformation of education systems and schools so that they can cater for the diversity of students’ learning needs resulting from their social and cultural background and their individual characteristics as regards learning motivations, abilities, styles, and rhythm. According to this perspective, it is not the students enrolled in school that must adapt to the existing educational provision, but rather the school that should be adapted to the needs of every student, since all students are different.”⁷³ Put another way, “the move toward inclusion is not simply a technical or organizational change but also a movement with a clear **philosophy**.”⁷⁴ (bold in original)

This has several implications for education systems around the world:

- They must **welcome difference and diversity** in the classroom, seeing these conditions as opportunities for, rather than obstacles to, more and better learning. They must also consider from the beginning the different needs and learning styles of individual students rather than planning for the average student, with a few tweaks, if any, for those not so average—or, in fact, for those far above average, i.e., the gifted.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Guijarro, R.B. 2008. Conceptual Framework of Inclusive Education. *A Brief Look at Inclusive Education Issues*. ED/BIE/CONFINTED 48/Inf.2. Geneva: UNESCO IBE. p. 7.

⁷⁴ UNESCO IBE. 2008a. General Presentation of the 48th Session of the ICE. Document ED/BIE/CONFINTED 48/4. Geneva. p. 11.

- Reflecting this focus on diversification, education systems must **implement a comprehensive restructuring**, from the education management information system (EMIS—what it looks for and reports on), to teacher education and curriculum and textbook development (what the system teaches about and how), to monitoring and assessment (what they measure in terms of student and system outcomes), to costing and budgeting (what they pay for).
- Education systems must **worry more about the last 5%**—and accept a much larger share of the blame for student failure. To the extent that a ministry (and minister) of education is satisfied with achieving a few (or more) percentage points less than universal primary education, often with the excuse that the remaining few are not educable or too expensive to educate, EFA will not be achieved.
- Education systems must **understand the fundamental need to start early** with ECCE as the foundation for inclusion through its ability to offset family disadvantage and social inequality and lead to successful learning. Exclusive, largely urban, and elite day care programs and kindergartens replicate and even reinforce social exclusion; universally available ECCE programs of good quality even the playing field, promote initial enrollment in primary education, reduce the exclusionary acts of repetition and dropout, and promote successful learning.

Restructuring at the level of the education system

Vision and goals

The education system's vision and goals must begin from a rights-based approach to education, rather than from a philosophy of defect and deficit, and the imposition of homogeneity and standardization, and therefore must ensure (i) equity—equal opportunities, or equal quality for all; (ii) the identification and removal of all barriers to educational participation and achievement; and (iii) the welcoming of diversity and difference. “Differences,” in this vision, become normal (rather than deviant) and should therefore be seen as opportunities to enrich the learning process.

Goals in this context should become more equity based and redistributive. EFA targets, in other words, should be redrafted to include the achievement not only of national aggregates (a secondary education NER of X%, a literacy rate of Y%) but also of reductions in disparities in achieving targets between genders; between urban and rural locations; and across districts, ethnic groups, and income percentiles.

Constitutional and legislative mandates

It is essential to develop legislation, and even revise constitutions, not only to rhetorically declare EFA but also to ensure its attainment through guaranteeing nondiscrimination and inclusion in line with the international conventions and declarations listed previously. At the level of the constitution, for example, articles can clearly articulate the right to basic education (and, progressively, other levels of education) by making it both free—of direct, indirect, and opportunity costs—and compulsory—as in Article 45 of India’s Constitution.

Legislation such as national education laws (e.g., India’s Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009 [Box 5]) can then follow in the attempt to ensure that inclusive education is part of wider education reform.

Box 5: Rights-based Education in India

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, passed by the Parliament of India on 4 August 2009, describes the modalities of the provision of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 in India under Article 21A of India’s Constitution. The law makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 and specifies the minimum norms in government schools. It specifies reservation of 25% seats in private schools for children from poor families, prohibits the practice of unrecognized schools, and permits no donation or capitation and no interview of the child or parent has a prerequisite for admission.^a

^a Government of India, Provisions of the Constitution of India having a bearing on Education. Department of Higher Education website. Available: www.education.nic.in/constitutional.asp

For example, legislation can

- insist that all categories of children (e.g., those with disabilities, of lower caste, or without birth certificates) can attend their local school;
- mandate gender parity and equality throughout the education system;
- in systems where special and regular education are covered by separate legislation and administration, ensure that the ministry of education has the ultimate authority over the education of all learners;
- prohibit both early marriage and child labor, especially that which is hazardous to children and/or interferes with their education;
- guarantee stronger school-based management and greater parental and community involvement in education, e.g., through more complete decentralization and the mandate to empower parent–teacher–community associations not only to worry about their own children but also to reach out to non-enrolled school-age children and their families; and
- guarantee the use of minority languages in the school system.

Identification of the excluded and analysis of the causes of exclusion

Education systems must spend greater effort in identifying and reaching out to those groups of learners excluded from schooling and from learning at each level of the system. This requires a more inclusion-focused EMIS (including out-of-school children), supported by relevant information and communication technologies. This includes

- collecting data more systematically on *all* children, youth, and adults in the country (including migrants, noncitizens, etc.), not just those in school—how many there are, where they live, and what their educational history (or lack thereof) is;
- disaggregating data (e.g., on enrollment, dropout and repetition rates; and achievement, completion, and transition) not only by region and level of the system (province, district, community) but also by gender, ethnicity and/or language, urban or rural location, poverty level, etc.; and
- carrying out analyses with these data to identify those groups systematically not enrolled, not learning, and not literate, and then implementing research on the reasons for—the “drivers” of—this exclusion.

Development of inclusive policies, programs, structures, and budgets

A range of programs are available to target exclusion, discrimination, and resulting inequality. These must be based on a comprehensive inclusive education policy and derive from a clear analysis of where and how exclusionary processes operate and the identification of gaps between laws and practice. They must also depend upon strong intersectoral cooperation (but with the ministry of education ultimately in charge of all learners) and take into account the increasingly prevalent process of decentralization, ensuring that it leads to less exclusion and disparity rather than more.

One useful approach is the establishment of a national inclusive education policy, as has recently been almost completed in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). This policy, awaiting formal approval by the Prime Minister, lays out a comprehensive definition of inclusive education, sets goals for the education system, and defines clearly what a wide range of actors inside and outside the system must do to achieve the goals of making mainstream public education inclusive of and responsive to all learners.

More specifically, programs are needed to increase the affordability and accessibility of education, strengthen the learning environment and make it more inclusive, and expand the range of education opportunities available.

These include, early on in the cycle

- **prevention programs** to confront the causes of exclusion before they begin to exclude; these can include health and nutrition services for mothers and young children to prevent childhood disabilities;
- good quality **ECCE programs** that target the most disadvantaged; promote the use of the mother tongue as the basis for initial literacy; and sensitize young children in regard to issues of gender, class, and caste;
- more comprehensive **school health programs** (beginning at day care centers and in preschools) to provide additional needed health services and nutritional supplements; and
- **early identification of learning difficulties** through user-friendly teacher observations and checklists and subsequent referrals, when needed, to more specialized services.

Supportive, inclusionary programs also must focus on financial obstacles and can include approaches such as

- **identification of financial obstacles** to education (school and other fees, uniform and transport costs, etc.) and the targeted provision of scholarships and other cash transfer mechanisms, with clear legal and regulatory requirements and procedures, selection and eligibility criteria, and monitoring processes; the issue of “free education” leads to a wide range of policy issues: What, exactly, is free of cost? If too much is free, then can schools provide the quality of education desired?
- **block grants** to schools or clusters of schools linked to locally developed school improvement plans with a strong focus on equity and inclusion; and
- **greater private sector involvement in education** (e.g., through public–private partnerships), especially in ways that limit its cost for normally excluded groups, most often at higher levels of the system. This leads to the question of the extent to which the private sector is encouraged to provide even basic education with its quality regulated by the state—the purpose being to try to decrease the gap between good quality education for the elite and low-quality education for the poor. One recent proposal even calls on the Government of India to invite the private sector to set up schools and colleges for the very poor based on the principle that the taxes later collected by the government from successful graduates, over their lifetime, will revert to the company that educated them.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Sreedharan, R. 2009. *Educating India's Poorest: A Radical Plan to Attract Private Sector Investment*. Munich: Munich Personal RePEc Archive.

A large range of other innovative programs need to be considered to promote inclusion, like

- **programs to reach the remote** such as mobile schools (by boat, bus, or motorcycle) and the promotion and improvement of multigrade teaching and small schools (rather than their elimination based on cost-efficiency measures);
- **flexible, nonformal alternatives to formal schools**, but with appropriate assessment mechanisms, equivalency recognition, and the ability of successful learners to move back into the formal system;
- **programs focusing on smoother transitions** from one level to another—preschool to primary, primary to secondary; and
- **guidelines in regard to grade repetition** and promotion policies at the school level—i.e., given that repetition often leads eventually to dropping out, under what circumstances, if any, should repetition be permitted and what other mechanisms should be made available (e.g., earlier identification of the risk of failure, adequate remediation) to make it unnecessary?

Box 6 summarizes programs to promote inclusion. The creation or strengthening of structures mandated to promote inclusive education, both within the ministry of education and across other relevant ministries, can help ensure that these policies and programs are put in place. This might include an inclusive education directorate in the ministry or an interministerial committee. In the Lao PDR, for example, the Center for the Promotion of Education for Women and Ethnic and Disabled People (recently renamed as the Center for Inclusive Education) has just this kind of mandate.

Box 6: The Benefits of Inclusive Programs

Inclusive Programs	Excluded Groups Who Can Benefit
A. Early Intervention Programs	
Prevention programs • Confront causes of exclusion; promote health and nutrition services for mothers and young children to prevent childhood disabilities.	All
ECCE programs • Target the most disadvantaged; promote the use of mother tongue for initial literacy; and sensitize young children to gender, class, and caste issues.	All
School health programs • Provide additional health services and nutritional supplements for children in school.	All
Early identification of learning difficulties • Apply user-friendly teacher observations and checklists to identify disabilities and difficulties and provide referrals to more specialized services.	• Learners with disabilities
B. Financial Programs	
Identification of financial obstacles to education • Provide assistance for school-related expenses, scholarships, and cash transfer mechanisms with clear requirements and monitoring processes.	• Girls and women • The poor • Those living in remote areas
Block grants • Select schools or clusters of schools that are linked to locally developed school improvement plans with a strong focus on equity and inclusion.	All
Greater private sector involvement • Encourage the private sector to provide education regulated by the state to decrease the gap in the quality of education between the elite and the poor.	• The poor • Girls and women
C. Innovative Programs	
Programs to reach the remote • Provide mobile schools, and promote and improve multigrade teaching and small schools.	• Those living in remote areas
Flexible, nonformal alternatives to formal schools • Incorporate appropriate learner assessment mechanisms and equivalency recognition, and enable successful learners to return to the formal system.	All
Programs for smoother transitions • Cover all levels: preschool–primary–secondary–post-secondary.	All
Guidelines on grade repetition and promotion • Identify risks of failure early and provide adequate remediation to avoid repetition and dropping out.	All

All = Girls and women, the poor, those living in remote areas, ethnic and linguistic minorities, people with disabilities, and HIV/AIDS-affected learners, ECCE = early childhood care and education.

Inclusion-based budgeting, which examines what the extra cost will actually be to include all learners in the system, and more explicitly redistributive financial transfers to support education for excluded groups, can further support the genuine implementation of more inclusive education. It might also provide estimates of the social and financial costs of excluding learners from education (including repetition, dropout, and pushout) to convince policy makers that investing in more inclusive and responsive education is ultimately less costly. India, for example, now uses a district-level education development index, and districts in the lowest quartile on the index receive twice as much per student as those in the highest quartile.⁷⁶

All of this can be helped by the development of a some kind of inclusion “lens”—much like gender lenses now being used in some education systems around the world—as a way of looking at policies, programs, projects, and/or budgets; and illuminating their inclusive aspects (or their absence).

Curricula and materials

The education system’s curricula, classroom texts, and other teaching materials are very often standardized and inflexible as well as being overloaded and highly academic. They are suitable, perhaps, for the average student but often difficult to adapt to the diverse needs of the large range of students actually sitting in the classroom. The solution is to define a limited national core curriculum of essential knowledge, goals, and values, and then to make delivery of this standard curriculum less standard through the promotion of processes such as differentiated instruction, multilevel instruction, teaching to multiple intelligences, etc. Such “curriculum differentiation” helps teachers respond “to the diversity among learners in any one classroom by using student characteristics such as student background, experiences, interests, learning modalities, abilities, and needs to modify and adapt the curriculum.”⁷⁷ In other words, different content can be used in different ways, with different materials and methods, to teach the required curriculum.

This content, of course, must also help develop knowledge, attitudes, and values as well as teaching–learning methods that support a genuinely inclusive society, with a focus on nondiscrimination, human rights, removal of stereotypes, and respect for diversity. This requires a comprehensive review of existing curricula and materials to see to what extent these ideals are currently being promoted and whether, in fact, stereotypes exist in regard to sex, ethnicity, rural origin, and disability. This means also that any revision of curricula and texts should be done through the perspective of an inclusive education lens.

⁷⁶ UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. p. 11.

⁷⁷ Ahuja, A. 2005. Staring Down the Curriculum Monster: Using Curriculum Differentiation to Respond to Students’ Diversity. *EENET Asia Newsletter*. June 2005. p. 19. See also UNESCO. 2004. *Changing Teaching Practices: Using Curriculum Differentiation to Respond to Students’ Diversity*. Paris.

Pedagogical strategies and practices

While it is ultimately teachers and schools that have the responsibility to be more inclusive, the education system must also develop and promote pedagogical strategies and practices that encourage more children to enroll and learn. These include

- more interactive and child-centered teaching–learning methods, beginning from a clearer assessment of individual learning needs, with every child being seen as having his or her own “special” individual needs, leading to more personalized instruction, with mechanisms to help this happen even in large classes (e.g., children supporting children, teachers supporting teachers, schools supporting schools, and communities and schools supporting each other); and
- more flexible methods of teaching and learning such as team teaching, peer teaching, and multigrade teaching.

The last is particularly important. Recent research has indicated that over 30% of children studying in the developing world do so in a multigrade setting, with more than one grade being taught by a single teacher.⁷⁸ This is sometimes a permanent condition (in small, incomplete, and often remote schools with fewer teachers than grades) and sometimes temporary due to teacher absenteeism. But few education systems document the extent of this phenomenon, and fewer still adapt the curriculum and teaching materials to it or train teachers for it. Instead they often consider such small, multigrade schools as inefficient and of inferior quality, close them down, and then consolidate their pupils in larger (and often unreachable) schools or house them in poor-quality, culturally destructive boarding schools.

The irony, of course, is that many developed country education systems are consciously work *toward* multigrade contexts, understanding their potential—through team and peer teaching, thematic rather than grade-specific curricula, language-specific rather than age-specific classes, etc.—for improving the quality of education. Thus, the further development of multigrade teaching not only is good in small-school contexts to get otherwise excluded children learning but can also be useful in helping all children learn better.

Teacher education

The restructuring of teacher education toward inclusion, especially preservice education, is not an easy thing to do. Preservice institutions tend to be one of the most conservative parts of an education system, with their curriculum often lagging behind that found in schools, lecturers having little experience

⁷⁸ Little, A., ed. 2007. *Education for All and Multigrade Teaching: Challenges and Opportunities*. London: Springer.

at the school level for which they are training teachers, and only a tenuous connection to the realities of the classrooms their graduates will enter. A recent study of preservice teacher education systems in regard to inclusive education in seven countries of South and Southeast Asia⁷⁹ found very few national or even institutional policies related to inclusive education; very few explicit subjects or training modules that dealt with inclusion in general or specifically with issues of gender, disability, ethnicity, and human rights; teacher education materials (and their authors) that little reflected the diversity of the nation's population (and even reflected it badly); and a cohort of candidate teachers (and their lecturers) that underrepresented ethnic minorities and often completely excluded anyone with disabilities.

Examples from this study are as follows:

- A review of school texts in Cambodia showed that characters with a rural and or remote background were badly underrepresented (and often negatively presented) and that characters with disabilities were nearly invisible, with most of the few illustrations showing them as ugly, unintelligent, hopeless, or sad.
- In one district in the Lao PDR, in a province where 97% of the population does not speak Lao as their mother tongue, only between 2% and 8% of teacher education lecturers come from these other language groups; in another institute, Lao speakers make up 48% of the students and only 8% of the local population.
- Most authors of teacher education materials, in almost all countries, are university-based, urban-resident, and upper-caste or upper-class people.

In general, therefore, education ministries, in their teacher education policies, do not systematically insist that new teachers are educated in learning either the facts of exclusion (who, where, and why) or approaches to inclusion. Teacher trainees do not learn the skills to identify, assess, and respond to the diversity of their classroom, and certainly do not learn to welcome it, appreciate it, and use it to improve the quality of their teaching.

Several things must therefore be done to make a difference:

- Develop affirmative action programs to recruit more candidate teachers from excluded and underrepresented groups, including women (and sometimes men), those from ethnic groups, and those with disabilities; this can include, temporarily, lower criteria for entry into preservice programs, special funding, remedial courses, and deployment back to their community of origin at graduation.

⁷⁹ Shaeffer, S. 2009b. A Review of Pre-Service Teacher Education and Inclusive Education in Asia. Unpublished.

- Help student teachers develop positive attitudes toward diversity and difference (welcoming rather than negating), and skills in inclusive practices.
- Ensure that teacher graduates understand
 - the essential normative documents, international or national, that mandate inclusion and the realization of the right to EFA;
 - the extent of diversity in their society and the resulting development challenges; this includes knowing the number of languages spoken in the country, the percentage of people with disabilities, the beliefs and traditions of the students they are teaching, and the existing inequities by gender in the education system and in society as a whole;
 - how to map the nature of diversity in their own classrooms and identify children excluded from learning or at risk of failure and dropping out; examples of this could include minor disabilities, language and early reading problems, or frequent absenteeism; teachers also need to have the skills to design ways to include the excluded, for example, by moving children with sight and hearing problems to the front of the room, referring them to health workers in the community, or responding to the reasons for frequent absenteeism;
 - how to analyze their own behaviors and methods—as “reflective practitioners”—that might be increasing exclusion or at least not responding to it; these include treating girls differently from boys, ignoring the “difficult” and “slow” learners, or not responding to the problems of children who do not understand the language used in teaching or those with behavior problems due to domestic violence, sexual abuse, or other nonacademic factors in their lives; teachers must be able and willing to reflect on their own practices when seeking explanations for lack of student learning, and to consider inadequacies in content, methodology, and learning environment rather than inadequacies in children;
 - in multilingual contexts, specific language skills in either teaching in the mother tongue, where permitted, or using the mother tongue for the mastery of the national language;
 - general skills for teaching in two specific kinds of classrooms, each of which can lead to exclusion—in large ones, where many children may be ignored or neglected, and in very small ones, where multigrade techniques may be necessary to ensure that all children have the same opportunity to learn.

In-service teacher education also needs to be redesigned to focus more on helping teachers (and principals) in school move toward greater inclusion—for example, in trying to plan a lesson that will be useful to every member of the class. Also, teachers who have any specialized training for inclusion, especially related to disabilities, tend to end up teaching in special, rather than regular,

classrooms; more and more of them should be working in, or directly assisting, regular schools.

Language of instruction

Of particular concern related to exclusion in the teaching–learning process is the language of instruction. If children do not understand what they are listening to or are asked to read in a classroom, they will have difficulty learning. The issues around this exclusionary factor are complex and controversial. But evidence continues to show that mother tongue–based bilingual education programs—where initial literacy is in the mother tongue, leading to a successful transition to literacy in the national (and then international) language—are essential for the inclusion of linguistic minorities in education. “The most important conclusion from ... research and experience ... is that when learning is the goal, including that of learning a second language, the child’s first language (i.e., his or her mother tongue) should be used as the medium of instruction in the early years of schooling...The first language is essential for the initial teaching of reading and for comprehension of subject matter. It is the necessary foundation for the cognitive development upon which acquisition of the second language is based.”⁸⁰

There are many valid, but also usually solvable, challenges to mother tongue–based bilingual education programs. Suitable orthographies can be developed for languages that lack them; mother-tongue and bilingual texts and materials can be produced relatively cheaply, often with local community participation; members of linguistic minorities can be supported to become teachers, often with targeted, affirmative action; mechanisms can be developed to handle more than one mother tongue in a classroom; and all of this can be done in cost-effective ways, leading, in fact, to later cost savings through lower repetition and dropout rates.

The more difficult challenge is that which underlies much of the opposition to such programs: cultural and political unwillingness, often grounded in historical circumstances, to recognize, value, and empower ethnic minorities and the fear that such empowerment will weaken, rather than strengthen, the central, unified state. Unless this underlying challenge is met, ethnic minority children will continue not to enter school, or to fail in school, and EFA will not be achieved.

⁸⁰ Dutcher, N., and G.R. Tucker. 1996. The Use of First and Second Languages in Education. *Pacific Islands Division Paper 1*, East Asia and Pacific Region. Washington, DC: World Bank. p. 36.

Student assessment

Just as teaching and learning processes must be more personalized, so, too, must learning assessment procedures, both formative (ongoing classroom assessment of individual progress in learning without grading, used to enhance learning, rather than for selecting out “poor achievers”) and summative (system assessment for certification). Too often, these procedures, standardized for all students, are overly competitive and comparative, and they either embarrass or completely exclude the slow ones or those with disabilities or language differences, either through self-selection (dropping out) or, pursuant to the school’s competition for good results, school selection (pushing out). Policies permitting more individualized assessment are therefore needed, e.g., portfolio assessment rather than the one-chance-only final examination, special testing procedures for special needs, and early reading achievement tests in the mother tongue.

Finally, it is important in the development and implementation of this vision and these goals to promote strong and broad partnerships of advocacy groups, professional organizations, health and social services providers, researchers, key opinion leaders, specialist organizations, local-level service providers and educational authorities, teacher educators, and media. One thing is critical in this regard—the development of multistakeholder ministry of education and interministerial committees with the participation of NGOs (such as the national human rights commission) and community-based organizations toward inclusive education.

Restructuring at the level of the school and community

Promoting diversity-responsive, inclusive education also requires a restructuring of how education is provided at the level of the school and community. This essentially means developing schools of good quality that are inclusive and child friendly—not only child centered in the usual sense of the word but also *child seeking*, explicitly looking for children not in school and getting them enrolled, paying special attention to children not learning in the classroom, and therefore personalizing education so that all children can enroll and learn.

The common assumption of the 1970s and 1980s was that if a school was built, children would come. Many schools were therefore built—thousands, for example, through a massive program in Indonesia—but many children still did not enroll. The rather more sophisticated, post-Jomtien perspective realized that the school, to be attractive, had to be of some quality and local relevance—and then, certainly, the children would come. This did lead to higher enrollments, but the last 3% (or 5% or 10%) still did not enroll—a number too often ignored

by ministries of education in their focus on the NER increases rather than on the absolute number of children still not in school. The post-Dakar view, reinforced by the mid-decade assessment of EFA, changed the focus once again; education systems, and especially schools, must be genuinely inclusive, more proactively identifying children not in school and getting them enrolled and learning—and in the process, adapting the school to the needs of individual children rather than the children to the needs of the school.

But it can be argued that most teachers prefer small and homogeneous classrooms—not too different in regard to age, socioeconomic status, language, ability, etc. Thus, they are satisfied with students who have “volunteered” for school, and they often have little interest in, or do not feel responsible for, children who are not enrolled and who are “different.” (The same is true, of course, for many parents of “normal” children, who do not want the school’s quality diluted by learners with disabilities or those from the poor or lower castes, or their own children “endangered” by others affected by HIV/AIDS.) By the same token, as we have seen, schools are also quite good at “pushing out” many of the “different” students who do get in (calling them “dropouts”) by using a language many do not understand, by setting fees and/or other expenses too high, and by turning small disabilities into large impairments.

Inclusive, child-friendly schools

UNICEF has most fully developed the child-friendly school model,⁸¹ but it shares characteristics with many other models that are concerned with outcomes more than only academic effectiveness and measurable student achievement. Such a school must, of course, be effective in helping children learn what they want, and need to learn. But it must also be protective and healthy for children (both their physical and psychological health); sensitive to issues of gender; welcoming of student, parent, and community participation; and, above all, inclusive. It must therefore (i) not exclude or discriminate against on the basis of difference; (ii) provide education that is free and compulsory, affordable, and accessible; and (iii) respect and welcome diversity and respond to it as an opportunity and not as a problem. This has several implications for what child-friendly schools must do:

- They must have a **mechanism for identifying and enrolling the excluded**—a kind of child-focused, school- and community-based EMIS that collects data on all children aged 0–6 and beyond, their family circumstances, their health history, and their educational achievement. This might be based on local, community-level structures and data such as village government censuses or be a function of the parent–teacher–community association or school committee or even be the responsibility of the students themselves, mapping houses in

⁸¹ UNICEF 2009a. *Manual on Child-Friendly Schools*. New York.

the community with out-of-school children and working with teachers to get them enrolled.

- They must have a **healthy, protective, and inclusive school culture and learning environment**—hygienic, safe, free of corporal punishment, and respectful of difference and diversity. They must not exclude on the basis of difference (language, gender, income, caste, ability) and therefore must resist the kinds of means tests—financial or academic—that are becoming more and more prevalent in schools around the region, beginning even with kindergarten; for example, the UIS survey of schools revealed that students’ performance on school entry tests was a high priority in close to 13% of schools in the Philippines and Sri Lanka.⁸²
- They must promote more **targeted, affirmative action** in regard to excluded learners. This can mean the abolition of school fees and other costs for some or (preferably) all students, targeted school food programs, assistance with transport, support for teachers to recognize children with emotional–behavioral problems, basic counselling skills for teachers, the provision of teacher aids and other special support (so-called “assistive devices”) for children with disabilities, and remediation for children with learning difficulties such as delayed literacy.
- They must be able to **assess learning differences** among their students and then **personalize instruction** to match these differences. This can mean working in the mother tongue of the students (even when more than one is spoken in a classroom), providing special assistance to children with disabilities (e.g., putting sight- and hearing-impaired students at the front of the room), and teaching in more gender-responsive ways in contexts where the gender of learners makes a difference.
- They must have an **inclusive school design and infrastructure**. In general, and with some exceptions (e.g., Cambodia, where there has been a special focus on the needs of land-mine victims), schools in Asia and the Pacific are seldom designed to serve the diversity of students who should be attending them; sanitation and hygiene issues relevant to education for girls are still often neglected.

There are two aspects to this issue. One is simply the general deterioration of the education infrastructure. Recent research in 11 countries participating in the World Education Indicators Survey of Primary Schools revealed some interesting results. The percentage of pupils attending village schools that needed either complete rebuilding or major repairs was 28.3% in Malaysia (30.1% in city and town schools), 74.5% in the Philippines (64.6% in towns), and 52.0% in Sri Lanka (49.2% in towns).⁸³

⁸² UIS. 2008b. *A View Inside Primary Schools*. p. 225.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

But more particularly, certain design issues are important for inclusion, especially, of course, in terms of the physically disabled: 75% of the respondents in the Inclusion International survey said that schools were not physically accessible, and 77% indicated this was a major factor affecting the enrollment and completion of children with disabilities.⁸⁴

The whole-school approach

Restructuring is more than environment and architecture, of course. For an issue as broad and deep as inclusive education, the need for a whole-school approach to change is essential. At a minimum, this involves the following aspects:

- **Inclusive school policies.** Individual schools, supported by their clusters and local education office as well as parents, community leaders, and their students, should base their school self-assessment and development plans (e.g., goals, targets, gaps to be filled, ways to fill them) on the principles of inclusion. This means actively looking for children in the community who are *not* in school and getting them enrolled, identifying the most important barriers to access to and learning in the school and trying to eliminate them, personalizing instruction to respond to diversity among the students, and welcoming this diversity and using it creatively to improve the quality of education provided.
- **Sympathetic and knowledgeable school leadership and supervision.** Head teachers, principals, supervisors, and inspectors must not only internalize the philosophy and principles of inclusiveness but also be able to support the practice of inclusive teaching and learning.
- **Support services and personnel.** Additional support, even extra staff, should be sought to assist in the implementation of more inclusive education. These might be teachers trained in special needs education, perhaps based in local resource centers (e.g., former special schools); parateachers, teaching assistants, and community members able to assist in bilingual education programs; school counselors and senior women teachers to support girls' development toward adolescence; "outreach" teachers able to provide education to children needing to remain at home; and remedial teachers, especially in early literacy, to ensure that slow learners receive the support they need.
- **In-service professional development and good practices.** Making education more inclusive and responsive to all learners, as we have seen, requires new teacher skills. In-service professional development is therefore required, and good practices in inclusive education should be sought, disseminated, and adapted to different contexts as needed. Two useful materials to support this development,

⁸⁴ Inclusion International. 2009. *Better Education for All*. p. 82.

designed by the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education in Bangkok, are the following:

- *Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments.*⁸⁵ This toolkit consists of eight modules designed to help teachers understand and practice inclusion, with special reference, for example, to being inclusive in large classes and to working in regular schools with children having disabilities.
 - *Toolkit for Promoting Gender Equality in Education.*⁸⁶ This toolkit includes a cluster of resources for use by education planners and implementers to incorporate gender equality into their work. It has materials dealing with gender-related definitions, the essential progression from gender equity to gender equality, a range of gender lenses, a classroom observation tool for assessing gender relations, and guidelines for developing and assessing gender-responsive EFA plans.
- **Local curriculum content.** Inclusion is made easier to the extent that the curriculum is made relevant to the local context and needs of learners rather than being completely standardized to a national and often urban-biased context. Many education systems, in fact, now mandate that a certain percentage of the curriculum in basic education (e.g., 25%) can be “local content”; but this is easier said than done. There is therefore the need to develop local competencies and skills to adapt and develop curricula to local and more inclusive contexts. The building of teachers’ capacity to be codevelopers of such curricula is an important part of the process.
 - **Community involvement.** More inclusive education cannot be achieved without the support and assistance of the local community. This is partly a matter of attitudes: if parents do not want children with disabilities, or of different castes or ethnicity, or affected by HIV/AIDS in the same classroom with their own children, and the school does nothing to combat this exclusionary attitude, then inclusion will never be achieved. Communities must therefore be encouraged to support the education of all children living in them. Parents and other community members can also more actively support inclusive practices; they can be involved, for example, in mapping children not in school, in enrollment campaigns, and in support in the classroom for excluded groups of learners or for mother-tongue teaching and learning.

⁸⁵ UNESCO Bangkok. 2006. *Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments*. Bangkok.

⁸⁶ UNESCO Bangkok. 2004. *Toolkit for Promoting Gender Equality in Education*. Bangkok.

An important resource for school-level planning for inclusion is the *Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*,⁸⁷ which helps schools to systematically review all aspects of their cultures, policies, and practices related to inclusive education. Now adapted for use in more than 25 countries and translated into more than 20 languages, the *Index* promotes a detailed investigation of what values, such as respect for diversity, equity, and community participation, mean for how education is provided in classrooms, schools, homes, and communities.

Specific responses to excluded groups

Given the above, based on good practices, and remembering that the ideal is not merely to develop separate responses to separate categories of excluded groups, many specific responses can be made to include the excluded, all within a general philosophy of inclusion. Some of these responses for excluded groups are as follows:

- **Girls and women (and, increasingly, boys)**—scholarships and cash transfers to girl students or their families as a financial incentive to enter and stay in school, school feeding programs targeting girls, more female teachers, local advocacy to overcome cultural or religious reluctance to educate girls, the training of teachers in gender-sensitive and responsive teaching methods, girl-friendly school facilities (e.g., separate toilets), etc.;
- **The poor**—elimination of school fees and other costs and/or provision of financial support through scholarships or other cash transfers, elimination of child labor, school feeding programs, and provision of flexible nonformal equivalency programs;
- **Those living in remote areas**—development of various mobile school models; multigrade teaching; culturally sensitive, child-friendly boarding schools; expansion in the number of (small) schools; incentives for teachers to go to and stay in remote locations;
- **Ethnic and linguistic minorities**—mother tongue–based multilingual education programs to ensure initial literacy (including development of orthographies for languages without them, learning materials in ethnic languages, and teachers from minority groups—see Box 7);

⁸⁷ Booth, T., and M. Ainscow. 2002. *Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools*. Bristol, United Kingdom: Centre of Studies for Inclusive Education.

Box 7: Mother Tongue–Based Multilingual Education

More and more governments in Asia and the Pacific are moving toward the use of the mother tongue or home language in education, both to maintain and, in some cases, to further develop languages of ethnic minorities and to transfer the skills gained in initial literacy in the mother tongue to mastery of national and then international languages. In 2009, the Department of Education in the Philippines issued an order mandating the use of the mother tongue in initial education. Much of the dialogue around this order stemmed from the results of a pilot project in multilingual education in Lubuagan, Kalinga, where students in the experimental classes began with literacy in the mother tongue and oral use of English and Filipino (the official languages), then bridged gradually to literacy in English and Filipino. They significantly outperformed students in the control classes, which taught all subjects from grade 1 in the two official languages. The results were significant for grades 1, 2, and 3 and in English, Filipino, mathematics, and makabayan (values education).^a

^a SIL Philippines Partners. Available: www.sil.org/asia/philippines

- **People with disabilities**—checklists and teacher professional development to help teachers diagnose (and, if needed, provide further referral concerning) disabilities; provision of assistive devices and additional classroom support for disabled learners included in regular classrooms; transfer of special schools to ministries of education and, where possible, their conversion into resource centers for teachers in regular schools; and training in practical ways of coping with disabilities in the classroom, such as the document *Understanding and Responding to Children’s Needs in Inclusive Classrooms*;⁸⁸ and
- **HIV/AIDS-affected learners**—development and enforcement of legislation and ministerial regulations prohibiting discrimination against HIV/AIDS-affected learners and related advocacy with local communities.

A special word is needed on the importance of programs for ECCE. The evidence continues to mount that good quality ECCE programs are not only essential for young children (leading to better health and nutrition and stronger cognitive development) and their role as future adults (better employment, less dependence on social welfare systems, less involvement in the criminal justice system, etc.), but also good for children as future learners. Children with ECCE/ preschool experience enroll more, drop out and repeat less, achieve better, and move farther up the educational ladder than children without such experience.

⁸⁸ UNESCO. 2003. *Understanding and Responding to Children’s Needs in Inclusive Classrooms*. Paris.

Such programs are especially important in achieving inclusive education. This is partly because of their health, nutrition, and development benefits but also because they are unstructured and informal enough to be innately more inclusive of diversity (language differences, disabilities) but structured and formal enough so that children (and their families) get used to the environment likely to be found in a school. In other words, children in such schools become more ready for school (which does not mean, of course, that the school does not need to become more ready—i.e., more inclusive—for its pupils). Good quality ECCE experience is therefore an essential driver of a more inclusive education system.

Inclusive education: Implications for ADB programming

ADB must clearly define its comparative advantage—its particular niche—and its operational priorities in the promotion of inclusive education. This calls for three exercises:

- identification of the essential, core principles relating to inclusiveness that ADB will bring to every discussion with governments about the further development of their education sector;
- a decision in regard to the specific subsectors of education where ADB will prioritize its work on inclusion; and
- identification of other issues related to inclusion that could benefit from ADB's particular expertise and experience.

ADB's essential principles in regard to inclusive education

In the course of promoting policy and strategy dialogues and developing operational programs with ministries of education, within and across countries of Asia and the Pacific, ADB should maintain a number of core principles related to inclusive education:

- **Governments should adopt a broad framework of inclusion.** Ministries should be encouraged to develop policies and programs based on a definition of education that goes beyond disabilities, striving to remove all obstacles to participation and success in education for all learners and, in doing so, genuinely achieve EFA.
- **Governments should address both supply- and demand-side initiatives to promote an inclusive education system:** strengthening supply-side actions to augment education provision, particularly keeping in mind the needs of excluded communities, and providing support to remove demand-side bottlenecks to accessing education by the most vulnerable communities.
- **Data collection and analysis systems and mechanisms should be focused more on the excluded and on exclusionary processes and factors.** Ministries should strive to develop EMISs,

at both the national and local levels, that highlight the extent and nature of exclusion from schooling and from learning; this should help demonstrate—even map out—clearly and visibly (i) the diversity of society as it now exists; (ii) the advantages such diversity brings to the nation; (iii) the differing degrees of development and social inclusion among diverse groups; and (iv) the risks of their continuing underdevelopment, exclusion, and segregation. In terms of education, this of necessity includes the analysis of factors—demand and supply—that lead to unequal outcomes, NNERS, and failure.

- **Education goals should be more equity based and redistributive.** Ministries should be helped to develop targets for the next round of EFA (and the means to achieve them) that focus not only on increasing national aggregates but also on reducing disparities.
- **Governments should adopt initiatives that provide continued opportunities for life-long learning,** keeping in mind the education and training needs of children, adolescents, and adults who drop out or are pushed out from the system, while attempting to minimize such “leakages” from the regular education streams.
- **Equity should mean that disadvantage or exclusion is not only addressed at entry level but all along the education cycle** with regard to targets on timely grade-wise progression, completion of elementary, secondary, and higher education levels, and education attainments. To enhance efficiency and effectiveness of education systems, there is need to focus also on differentials in attainments that may be influenced by socioeconomic and other exclusionary factors.
- **Governments should adequately finance a unified education system** for all learners, especially at the level of basic education. Governments should eliminate investments in separate education systems, managed by different ministries (but without eliminating funding to enable choice for some learners with severe disabilities); the private sector, with quality assured by the ministry, can assist in this process.
- **Inclusive education requires genuinely multisectoral and multiministerial dialogues** and policies. Ministries of education, starting at the level of ECCE programs, should collaborate more closely with ministries concerned with health and nutrition, social welfare, gender equality, justice, and others in addressing and trying to eliminate all obstacles to inclusive education.
- **Ministries of education should develop institutions with a special responsibility for inclusive education** and/or its individual components—and not merely assume that such an approach to education can be easily mainstreamed in a complex ministry structure.
- **Governments should provide explicit and adequate support** to finance a policy framework for inclusive education leading toward a restructuring of the education system (e.g., a national policy, a clear inclusive education focal point within the ministry, more explicit

programs targeting the excluded, larger budgets for reaching the still unreached, and a special focus on professional capacity building and support for teachers).

ADB's specific subsectoral priorities in regard to inclusive education

Based on ADB's recent priorities as outlined in its *Strategy 2020*,⁸⁹ two particular subsectors stand out in regard to expanding its emphasis on inclusiveness:

Technical and vocational education and training

As mentioned previously, TVET has become an increasingly important (and often contentious) issue among education planners, particularly in the continuing debate over the proper mix of academic and technical/vocational content at the secondary level. This subsystem is often underfinanced by governments and unpopular with parents and students, and therefore it fulfills the expectation of being “second-class.” Many children from more excluded groups end up in this underfinanced, poor-quality subsystem, thereby increasing their disadvantage.

ADB can strengthen its TVET programming with ministries toward inclusion in a number of ways:

- **More systematically collect and analyze TVET data** to identify the nature and size of the target audience (excluded groups needing TVET) and the extent to which these groups (girls, learners with disabilities, working children) are included (or even more greatly excluded) from existing TVET programs.
- **Disaggregate enrollment data per program by gender** to assess the extent of gender bias (Can girls become mechanics? Can boys learn how to cook?), and work to overcome evident stereotypes.
- **Map the provision of TVET programs** in areas where excluded groups predominate (e.g., Are they found in remote and rural areas and in urban slums? If not, why not? And what could be done to ensure better provision?).
- **Provide adequately flexible TVET programs** for children outside of the formal system (e.g., street children and working children) or small-scale, perhaps more informal programs for learners living in more remote and rural areas.

⁸⁹ ADB. 2008. *Strategy 2020: The Long-Term Strategic Framework of the Asian Development Bank 2008–2020*. Manila.

- **Strengthen access for excluded or disadvantaged groups to skill development and training that serve “modern” or “new economy” industries** that enjoy accelerated growth benefits.
- **Map private sector and NGO programs** that may focus on these groups (e.g., skills training for learners with disabilities), and help them expand their efforts.
- **Support stronger public–private partnerships in TVET**, leading to more participation in good quality TVET programs by excluded groups.
- **Strengthen opportunities to the disadvantaged for re-training and re-skilling programs** to facilitate labor mobility and adaptations required for knowledge based industries.

Underlying all of these efforts, of course, must be a concerted government effort to increase the status of TVET. Making it clear that only those who fail entry into academic institutions go into TVET programs, and providing TVET facilities visibly inferior to formal school facilities will only make the TVET system more a refuge for the already excluded—and lead to their further exclusion later in life.

Higher education

Although this level of education has increased dramatically in size in Asia and Pacific, for obvious reasons it is the most exclusive level of all. Few students of usually excluded groups end up qualifying for entry into higher education (i.e., graduate from secondary school and pass university entrance examinations), and those who do find the costs prohibitive. Although more and more countries are developing student subsidy and/or loan systems, these are not now adequate.

ADB can strengthen its programming in higher education toward inclusion in a number of ways:

- **Promote policies to create or expand quotas** for excluded groups and lower qualifications needed for entrance (but with remedial support); this is already frequently done in teacher training institutions.
- **Encourage ministries to diversify higher education** by expanding opportunities in institutions less academic than universities (e.g., polytechnics).
- **Rebalance cost-sharing formulas** to ensure that those who can pay, pay more, so that those who cannot readily pay, pay less.
- **Explore greater private sector involvement in higher education and stronger public–private partnerships**, leading to more participation in good quality higher education by excluded groups.

- **Encourage higher education institutions to more adequately fulfill their public service role** by developing mechanisms to seek out and affirmatively act to enroll students from underrepresented groups.

Other areas related to inclusion where ADB can play a stronger role

In addition to the priority program areas discussed above, there are other issues related to inclusive education where ADB could play a stronger role—by itself or in the context of the inclusive education efforts of governments and partners. These include the following:

- **Building the individual and institutional capacity needed to develop and implement more inclusive education policies and programs.** One usually “orients” or “sensitizes” ministers and other senior education officials, rather than “trains” them. But because barriers to inclusion are often as much attitudinal as programmatic (e.g., “the disabled cannot learn,” “girls need less education than boys do,” “national unity and the mastery of the national language are invariably threatened by the promotion of ethnic minority languages”), such sensitization of high-level officials in the principles and practices of inclusive education, and the more explicit training of lower-level officials down to the level of the school and community, constitute an essential part of the advocacy and capacity-building processes, including the following:
 - those at the professional middle level—planners, statisticians and data analysts, budget and finance specialists, curriculum and textbook developers, programmers, etc.;
 - teacher educators, especially in preservice institutions; and
 - local-level education officials and administrators, supervisors, principals, and teachers.
- **Collecting and synthesizing a body of evidence,** preferably from similar contexts (Asian rather than not, with similar economic, cultural, and political characteristics), concerning the importance of inclusive education in achieving EFA goals, in promoting economic and social development, and especially in refuting many misconceptions related to exclusion (e.g., the disabled *can* learn, girls *do* need as much education as boys, initial literacy in mother tongue *can* lead to greater mastery of the national language).

- Where such evidence is lacking, **promoting more assessments and evaluations of inclusive education programs.** It is equally important to consciously assess and evaluate existing policies and programs (monolingual education programs, private preschools, automatic promotion without systematic remediation) to demonstrate their contribution, if any, to exclusion—their contribution to pushing children out of school and to unequal achievement in terms of the NER, transition rates, and achievement scores.
- **Identifying, analyzing, and disseminating good practices in inclusive education** through the development of a comprehensive good practice information network accessible to lower levels of the system.

Inclusive education: Implications for ADB mechanisms and procedures

Strengthening ADB's commitment to the support of inclusive education also has implications for its operating mechanisms and procedures.

Strengthening partnerships with excluded groups and civil society organizations

Given the wide range of groups systematically excluded from education, and the historically often piecemeal process of including them, there has arisen a plethora of interest groups and nongovernment/civil society organizations—in addition to some government agencies—that provide education, of some kind, to these groups. To the extent possible, as discussed previously, this provision should be integrated into some more logical whole; an essential part of this process is the strengthening of partnerships among these organizations—at the national, state, and local levels—to support

- advocacy and public awareness campaigns;
- identification of key issues and challenges for future programming;
- support of community outreach and training activities; and
- independent monitoring and reporting of progress toward inclusion in education; it is in this context that an important partner in this process is the national human rights system, especially as it operates to develop country reports to relevant international instrument evaluation mechanisms (such as for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women).

Collaborating within ADB and with other major actors

Another implication for ADB actions in regard to inclusive education is the need to promote more collaboration among the relevant actors. This means both intersectorally within ADB (e.g., between education and health) and thematically (with policies and strategies related to, e.g., indigenous people), and interagency, across other bilateral and multilateral agencies and international NGOs. Out of such collaboration would come more comprehensive and synergistic support to inclusive education activities and also, perhaps, a common definition of inclusive education and guidelines for inclusive education systems planning and financing (e.g., an inclusive education lens). It could also lead to more effective, accurate, and up-to-date monitoring of inclusive education factors such as school attendance and dropout rates, and government financing focused on the most excluded groups.

Exploring more innovative project design and implementation options

In the promotion of innovative inclusive education policy frameworks and programs, a range of programmatic options is available, including

- **development of “whole sector” vision and strategy to address inclusion across different levels**, recognizing that inclusion at higher levels of education is predicated upon a highly inclusive system at basic levels and possible alternative or “catch up” streams to bring back those who drop out at various levels;
- **development of disaggregated data on the inclusiveness of systems** such that key indicators of access, retention, completion, and attainments in education **can be tracked** separately for the excluded and marginalized communities;
- development and use of an **inclusion lens**;
- **more program loans** promoting comprehensive, systematic, inclusive education frameworks, programs, and strategies, from planning to monitoring and evaluation;
- **improved targeting** of activities for excluded groups, with the involvement of these groups from the outset;
- **more focused project monitoring and evaluation**, examining the exclusionary impact of existing education programs and the impact of programs leading to educational and social inclusion; and
- **expansion of coverage**—the scaling up—of successful inclusive education approaches.

This last point deserves special attention. Too often, aid agencies withdraw support for reforms and innovations before they have become genuinely “owned” by, “internalized” in, and disseminated across the education system. The decision is often a financial one, of course, but also derives from the expectation that the generalization of an innovation, once proven effective, is the responsibility of the government. But this does not always happen. To explore why, Jeffrey Sachs in 2005, through the United Nations Millennium Project, identified key “success factors” in national scaling-up of innovations, including (and here made relevant for inclusive education) the following:

- political leadership (Does it exist for inclusive education?);
- effective and coordinated local-to-national human resources and public management strategies (Do these include a focus on building the capacity of education officials in inclusive education?);
- mobilization of private sector engagement, support, and investment (and also of relevant NGOs and civil society);
- effective monitoring of progress against national goals and benchmarks (Are there measurable targets and outcomes and appropriate information systems for inclusive education?); and
- long-term, predictable funding commitments and technical assistance from aid agencies (Do these exist for inclusive education?).⁹⁰

ADB could more explicitly support such success factors in its education programming.

Providing adequate budget support

A major implication for future ADB support to inclusive education is budgetary. Reaching the excluded is more expensive, in general, than reaching mainstream students, because the former are more difficult to reach, and doing so requires more system flexibility, special services, and/or more financial support. There are, of course, long-term financial benefits to the education system and society in general from more inclusive education. Those who would never have been schooled can be provided greater literacy and numeracy and therefore can enter more fully into the socioeconomic life of the nation. Those who have been schooled badly and therefore repeat, drop out, or fail can stay in the system and achieve more, thereby also producing efficiency savings within the education system. But achieving these outcomes will cost additional money, and education systems seldom take into account the extra costs of fully reaching EFA targets.

⁹⁰ Inclusion International. 2009. *Better Education for All*. pp. 110–111.

ADB, therefore, can help governments in this process, beyond policy dialogue, capacity building, etc., by redirecting its current investments to more explicit inclusive education strategies and outcomes (e.g., mother-tongue language programs, scholarships, and subsidies) or increase its financing to respond to needs of inclusive education. In addition, ADB should explore the use of public–private partnerships for improving inclusion in education provision to reduce cost burden of governments.

Adjusting support to respond to the economic crisis

The recent economic crisis has affected the region in quite different and often quite invisible or immeasurable ways. A whole range of effects have occurred—higher food insecurity, malnutrition, and hunger; higher fuel prices; lower private capital flows; weakened exports; and higher public debt. The net effect is striking: “The economic crisis is projected to increase by 65 million people in 2009. In East Asia alone, 10.2 million people who should have escaped poverty will instead remain below the poverty line.”⁹¹

A lot of the evidence concerning the impact on education is still anecdotal and piecemeal. One study in Bangladesh found that large increases in food prices in 2007 and 2008 “had forced half the poor households covered to remove children from school as a cost-saving measure.”⁹² Higher unemployment, lower remittances from migrant labor, and a slower rate of poverty reduction will exacerbate the problem—especially the decrease in remittances, since “remittance flows are a critical source of education financing. Households receiving remittances spend twice as much on education as those that do not and children are significantly more likely to be enrolled as those from nonreceiving households.”⁹³ And “as prices increase and livelihood opportunities contract, households are resorting to adverse coping strategies, ranging from skipping meals to selling product assets, buying food and inputs on credit, or withdrawing children from school.”⁹⁴

In general, however, it is clear that the economic crisis in some countries has led both to decreased government spending on education, as part of general budget reductions, and to lower family incomes, especially at the bottom of the

⁹¹ World Bank. 2009. *Battling the Force of Global Recession*. Washington, DC.

⁹² UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. p. 167.

⁹³ Mok, K.H. 2009. Economic Shocks in Education. *Global Social Policy: Children and the Economic Crisis in East Asia 9* (supplement). Singapore: Sage. p. 146.

⁹⁴ Kohler, G., and D. Toole. 2009. The Impact of the Crises on Children: A Policy Review from South Asia. In *Global Social Policy: Children and the Economic Crisis in East Asia 9* (supplement). Singapore: Sage. p. 17.

economic ladder, and thus, among other impacts, to less money available for getting children into school and keeping them there.

This fact only makes education, again, more exclusive. During economic recessions, ADB and other development agencies, individually and in education sector working groups, must (i) advocate with government not to cut, and even to increase, budget allocations to social welfare ministries, including education, and extend greater external support; and (ii) fund more significantly, at least temporarily, many of the subsidy-oriented strategies mentioned above, including scholarships, and block grants.

“Those excluded from education are often simply not seen. If seen, they are often not counted. If counted, they are often not served. If served, they are often served badly. Inclusive education means making visible the invisible and ensuring that all learners fulfill their right to an education of good quality.”⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Shaeffer, S. 2009a. Inclusive, Child-Friendly Schools: A Framework for Quality Education. Unpublished.

Annex: Subregional patterns of exclusion

Central Asia

The Education for All (EFA) Mid-Decade Assessment for Central Asia defined that subregion's disadvantaged and marginalized groups as follows:

- **“Socially disadvantaged:** children with disabilities; orphans; children left without parental care; problem children (deviants); street children; children from problem families; refugees; large families; unemployed; nonstudents and nonworking young people; and single elderly people
- **Marginalized groups:** homeless; people discharged from penitentiary institutions; migrants and refugees and stateless children/children without legal identity papers.”¹

As in other subregions, poverty, the lack of skilled ministry staff, urban–rural disparities, and the increasing commercialization of what is seen to be “quality” education also play a role in exclusion. More particularly, the Soviet-dominated era discouraged experimentation with more flexible, context-specific, and decentralized approaches to education and other social services. The general deterioration of state finances and economic health after the collapse of the Soviet Union led both to the serious reduction in early childhood care and education services and to growing problems of child labor, child trafficking, and internal migration—leading to an increasing number of out-of-school children. The ratio of “education poverty” rates between the most deprived area of a country and the national average is one of the highest in the subregion—5.0, for example, for the Kyrgyz Republic.²

Of special note is the Soviet-style approach to “defectology”—the study and education of “handicapped” children and adults. The historically extensive network of special institutions and programs for people with disabilities is crumbling, just as more and more special needs are being identified, and the new definition of inclusion, which should pull such people into the regular system, is not yet well understood or accepted.

¹ UNESCO. 2008. *Central Asia Subregion EFA Mid-Decade Assessment Report*. Almaty, Kazakhstan: UNESCO.

² UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. p. 161.

South and West Asia

More so, perhaps, than in other parts of Asia and Pacific, those excluded from education in South and West Asia are more likely to be part of a larger economic, social, ethnic or linguistic, and/or religious group that is educationally disadvantaged. This has often led to the creation of a number of parallel education systems: public systems, often of dubious quality, for the majority of learners; expensive private systems for the urban elite; systems managed by nongovernment organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, and ethnic or religious groups, of varying quality (from the very poor to large systems such as those run by BRAC in Bangladesh); and an increasing number of private, for-profit schools, which often promise (but cannot deliver) an English-language, international-standard education to the aspiring lower-middle classes of the subregion—in other words, not at all a comprehensive, coordinated, and quality-controlled system.

The groups most excluded from any education, or from an education of minimally acceptable quality, are particularly characterized by

- high levels of **poverty**, including child labor (15% of girls and 14% of boys are involved in such labor),³ and low parental education;
- large **caste- and class-based disparities**—the gap between the richest and the poorest 20% of the population in terms of number of years in education is 4.4 years in Bangladesh, 6.9 years in India, and 6.5 years in Pakistan;
- **ethnic and linguistic barriers**, especially of tribal groups; according to United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report 2004*,⁴ 34% of children in South Asia are in schools where the language of instruction is not their mother tongue;
- **isolation** through geographical barriers of high mountain ranges and wide-ocean expanses between small islands;
- **difficult circumstances** such as living in huge slums, armed conflict, natural disasters (earthquakes, cyclones, tsunamis, floods), and the displacement of people both internally and between countries (with Pakistan—along with Iran—being home to one-fifth of the world's refugees, and Nepal having 3.4 million stateless people);⁵
- **gender**, universally to the disadvantage of girls and women, with South Asia having the largest number of out-of-school females in the world due to issues such as early marriage, sexual harassment, malnutrition, and the low proportion of female teachers;⁶ and
- **disability**, where the vast majority of learners so affected are excluded from school and even completely invisible to the education system.

³ UNICEF 2006. *State of the World's Children: Excluded and Invisible*. New York.

⁴ Cited in UNESCO Bangkok. 2009. *South Asia Subregion Synthesis Report*. Bangkok.

⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 2006. *Global Trend: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons*. Geneva.

⁶ Oxfam. 2006. *Girls' Education in South Asia*. London.

The results of these various exclusionary factors are notable: high out-of-school and dropout rates (in 2006, 13% of pupils dropped out before the end of first grade and 28% of adolescents were out of school)⁷ and, despite considerable progress in the achievement of EFA, still low enrollment rates at every level of the system. Cohort tracking in Pakistan, for example, indicates that for every 100 children of the official school entry age, only 43 will finish the last grade.⁸ South and West Asia still account for 25% of the global total of the out-of-school population. Particularly worrisome is that household surveys indicate that current data seriously underestimate the size of the problem—perhaps by 16 million in the case of India.⁹

Southeast and East Asia

The general impression of educational achievement in Southeast and East Asia is a positive one—the economic progress of much of the subregion, including the People’s Republic of China (PRC), inevitably being translated into higher educational participation and quality. But the actual picture is not so rosy, with stagnation rather than progress being the dominant theme.

The EFA Mid-Decade Assessments done for Southeast Asia (one for the Mekong subregion and one for “insular” Southeast Asia) identified major “unreached” and “underserved” groups as “the last percentages of the population who have either been historically and culturally excluded or have been pushed to difficult circumstances due to recent economic and political trends.”¹⁰ They include the following:

- **street children and working children.** In 2003 in Indonesia, about 1.5 million children aged 10–14 were in the labor force and not attending school. Another 1.62 million were also not attending school but helping at home.¹¹ In 2007, 1 million primary school-age children were out of school in the Philippines—an increase over previous years.
- **religious, linguistic, and ethnic minorities** as well as indigenous peoples—with over 700 languages in Indonesia alone and hundreds more across the region. One issue is that some countries underreport the number of languages, often counting ethnic groups rather than languages per se. There are also often large disparities in the mastery of the national language by different groups (e.g., a Lao literacy survey published in 2002 showed non-Lao ethnic groups with literacy levels 20%–25% lower than Lao ethnic groups).¹²

⁷ UNESCO. 2010a. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. p. 14.

⁸ UNESCO. 2010c. *Regional Overview: South and West Asia, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010*. Paris. p. 3.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ UNESCO Bangkok. 2008a. *Insular Southeast Asia Synthesis Report*. Bangkok. p. 28.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 37.

¹² UNESCO Bangkok. 2008b. *Mekong Subregion Synthesis Report*. Bangkok. p. 32.

- **adults and children with disabilities and/or special needs**, including a large number of children injured by landmines in countries of the Mekong subregion.
- **children of very poor families**, leading to malnutrition and childhood stunting (16% of children under five from East Asia and the Pacific¹³ in Indonesia). Also, “net enrollment rates of low-income against high-income groups vary by 17% and 52% at primary and secondary levels, respectively.”¹⁴
- **populations in rural areas** (over 70% of the population of the Mekong countries live in rural areas) and remote areas (e.g., the mountains of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic [Lao PDR]; the deserts of Mongolia; and the islands of Indonesia, the Philippines, and the Pacific).
- **children in difficult circumstances** (e.g., areas affected by armed conflict such as southern Philippines and Timor Leste).
- especially in the Mekong area, **undocumented and stateless persons, migrants (legal or illegal), refugees, and internally displaced persons**. In 2004 there were 1.3 million adult migrants from Cambodia, Myanmar, and the Lao PDR in Thailand, and 93,000 children under the age of 15, of whom only 13,500 were attending Thai schools.¹⁵
- **children affected or infected by HIV/AIDS**, who, despite a number of ministry regulations to the contrary, are still often excluded from school due to the social pressure from both teachers and parents.

The East Asian countries of the PRC and Mongolia (not considering the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea with its self-proclaimed universal, quality education) are also concerned with many of these marginalized groups but add two more: children of extremely remote and nomadic populations in Mongolia, and internal migrants in the PRC. The latter face household registration problems that restrict access to education; only two-thirds of Beijing’s 370,000 internal migrant children are enrolled in public schools, while many others end up in poor quality, unauthorized migrant schools.¹⁶

As a result of these exclusionary factors, the absolute number of out-of-school children in the subregion actually rose 3 million from 1999 to 2007—perhaps even more based on household data.¹⁷ And late entry and high dropout and repetition rates (especially in the first grade) in countries such as Cambodia, the Lao PDR, Myanmar, and the Philippines—and 10 million out-of-school adolescents (10% of the lower secondary school age)¹⁸—make the supposedly rosy picture even darker.

¹³ UNESCO. 2010c. *Regional Overview*. South and West Asia, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010. Paris. p. 1.

¹⁴ UNESCO Bangkok. 2008a. *Insular Southeast Asia Synthesis Report*. Bangkok. p. 35.

¹⁵ UNESCO Bangkok. 2008b. *Mekong Subregion Synthesis Report*. p. 34.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Of particular note is gender, which continues to disadvantage girls in more culturally or religiously traditional population groups of the subregion but which also is marked, increasingly, by the low enrollment and achievement of boys. In Malaysia, and the Philippines, for example, gender parity will not be achieved by 2015 due to the fact that boys are at a disadvantage in regard to almost all education indicators. This represents the danger of the feminization of education, such as is happening very seriously in countries like the Philippines, and in the Maldives and Sri Lanka; e.g., boys without role models. To what extent, therefore, should inclusive education also be promoted, for example, by a gender balance in teachers, with both male and female teachers present at all levels of education?

The Pacific

The Pacific is a much-neglected area of the world (e.g., in its subregional overviews, the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* continues to lump the subregion together with the much larger area of Southeast and East Asia). But in many ways the Pacific presents unusual challenges in regard to inclusive education. To its credit, its gross enrollment ratio for preprimary education is 20 percentage points higher than the larger Southeast and East Asia; the Pacific has a long tradition of private, community-based early childhood programs. But its net enrollment rate (NER) for primary education is lower by 10% (e.g., an NER of 62% in Vanuatu) and was actually considerably lower than in 1999 in the Cook Islands, Fiji Islands, and Vanuatu. Its gender parity index at 0.97 is also rather lower than that of the rest of Asia and Pacific—and even lower in secondary education.

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Strengthening Inclusive Education

Inclusive education addresses the diverse learning needs of all kinds of learners. It reaches out to excluded groups and goes beyond providing physical access to learning institutions to encompass academic and instructional access to learning concepts. This report clearly presents the development of inclusive education and provides a rationale for strengthening it. The report identifies the various forms of exclusion from education and stresses the patterns of exclusion by subsector and by subregion in Asia and the Pacific. It serves two main purposes: as a strategic and operational guide for ADB and its education sector staff in strengthening inclusive education projects in developing member countries; and as an informative resource for education ministries, institutions, and other stakeholders of education in the region.

About the Asian Development Bank

ADB's vision is an Asia and Pacific region free of poverty. Its mission is to help its developing member countries substantially reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of their people. Despite the region's many successes, it remains home to two-thirds of the world's poor: 1.8 billion people who live on less than \$2 a day, with 903 million struggling on less than \$1.25 a day. ADB is committed to reducing poverty through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.

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