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List of acronyms

AMR	Annual Ministerial Review
ASPnet	Associated Schools Project Network
APEID	Asia Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development
CA	Central Asia
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EFA	Education For All
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMR	EFA Global Monitoring Report
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HDR	Human Development Report
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NER	Net enrolment ratio
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
UPE	Universal primary education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNAIDS	The joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS

Part I: Introduction

I.1 Introduction

The ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) will be held in July 2011 in Geneva with a focus on “implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education.”

The AMR process consists of three main elements: i) a global review of the United Nations development agenda based on a comprehensive report by the Secretary General; ii) country-led thematic reviews at the regional level; and iii) a series of national presentations by both developing and developed countries on their progress in implementing internationally agreed development goals.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the AMR, hosted by the Government of Thailand together with the Tenth Meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand (22-24 March 2011), will examine the issue of “*education as the key to achieving all Millennium Development Goals*”. The key policy recommendations put forward during the discussions will be reflected in a summary report to be presented at the AMR ECOSOC session next July.

I.2 Context & overview of progress towards MDGs in the Asia-Pacific region

The MDGs, formulated in 2000, established concrete goals for 2015 and have provided a broad framework for much policy-making in developing countries over the past decade. The MDGs crystallized the growing consensus (that emerged during the 1990s) that poverty reduction and the provision of basic social services must take centre-stage in development policy.

Of the eight MDGs², two are directly related to education provision :

MDG 2 calls for the achievement of universal primary education (UPE) by 2015 - whereby every child will complete a full course of primary education;

MDG 3 calls for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women - with specific targets for the elimination of gender disparities at primary and secondary school levels by 2005 and across all education levels by 2015 .

The remaining MDGs focus on poverty reduction, health (including child mortality, maternal and infant mortality, malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and dengue fever), and environmental sustainability. The remaining MDGs focus on poverty reduction, health (including child mortality, maternal and infant mortality, malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and dengue fever), and environmental sustainability.

enrolment, and regressed on HIV prevalence. On the other hand, the group of smaller countries has done better on gender parity in secondary educational attainment, on which it is an early achiever, while India is lagging behind on the same. In addition, the parity indicator at the secondary and tertiary level must be understood within the context of pockets of low enrolment in some countries. Similarly, as a group, the Pacific Island countries have been less successful – regressing or making no progress apart from advancing only slowly in another two, those for infant and under-five mortality. Papua New Guinea is home to almost 70 per cent of the Pacific Island countries' population, so estimates for the sub-region are inevitably affected by this country's performance.⁶

⁶ United Nations (2010). *Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in an era of global uncertainty: Asia Pacific Regional Report 2009/10.*, p.12

Table 1: Progress in meeting International development goals in Asia

MDGs	1		2		3			4		5		6			7						
Indicators	\$1.25 /day poverty	Underweight children	Primary enrolment	Reaching last grade	Primary completion	Gender Primary	Gender Secondary	Gender Tertiary	Under 5 -mortality	Infant mortality	Antenatal care, at least once	Births by skilled professionals	HIV prevalence	TB incidence	TB prevalence	Forest cover	Protected area	CO2 emissions	ODP substance consumption	Water, total	Sanitation, total
Asia-Pacific	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Y	Y	Y	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	-	Y	Y	Ñ
Excluding China and India	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Y	Y	Y	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	-	Y	Y	-	Y	-	Y	Y	Ñ
South-East Asia	Y	Ñ	Ñ	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	-	Y	Y	Ñ
South Asia	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Y	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Ñ	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	-	Y	Y	Ñ

Part II. The education-related goals

II.1 MDG 2: Universal Primary Education

Ensure that by 2015 any child in any country will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

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in 2008. However, rapid progress is possible, such as in Cambodia where the share of children starting school at official age increased from 61% in 1999 to 79% in 2008.¹¹

In **Central Asia** (CA), progress towards UPE has been steady since the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000). There was an increase in the average **NER** from 88% in 1999 to 94% in 2008. Most countries with data (7 countries in GMR) have either achieved, or are on track to achieve, UPE by 2015.¹²

Table 2: Status of primary education

Sub-region	Net Enrolment Rate (1999)	Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate (2008)	Out-of-school children (2008)
Central Asia	88%	94%	322,000
East Asia & Pacific	96%	95%	7,869,000
South and West Asia	74%	90%	17,919,000
World	82%	90%	67,483,000

,5 541.:

the Pacific, the share of TVET in secondary enrolment was 16% in 2008 (six percentage points above the average of developed countries). Nearly half the students are women in this sub-region. In Central Asia, the share of TVET was 15%.²⁰ Traditional apprenticeships and on-the-job training thus appear to be more important routes to workforce skills development for the majority of Asian youth. The MDG Summit emphasized the importance of giving greater focus to the transition from primary education and access to secondary education, TVET and non-formal education and entry into the labour market.

Literacy (EFA goal 4): Non-formal education settings are arguably just as important as those in the formal sector. Learners of all ages often rely on access to non-formal education programmes for the acquisition of basic literacy skills when they have had little or no access to formal schooling. Inter-generational effects are clearly visible in the realm of literacy. Evidence suggests that mothers with even modest literacy skills are more likely to send their daughter to school than those who are illiterate. Clearly, adult literacy and educational attainment can impact not only on UPE, but also on the other MDGs. Moreover, effective literacy programmes need to be delivered in a language understood by learners.

In South and West Asia, the regional **adult** literacy rate increased by 15 percentage points between 2000 and 2008. The increase was 11.275 percentage points for women and 5.78 percentage points for men. The increase for women was 11.275 percentage points (from 48.23% to 59.505%) and for men 5.78 percentage points (from 42.225% to 48.005%).

The MDG Summit called for the need

benefits for women's empowerment as well as the improvement of their well-being and that of their families.²⁶

²⁶ UN Millennium Project (2005). Taking action: achieving gender equality and empowering women, United Nations Development Programme.

same period the region's population increased by some 800 million. The fastest growth and sharpest reductions in poverty continue to be recorded in East Asia. Because of its large population size, the Asia and the Pacific region nevertheless has the greatest number of poor people in the world. A particular challenge for the region remains the situation of underweight children – it is home to over 70% of the world's underweight children under age five.³¹ Feeding and body weight monitoring provided by many early childhood programmes can directly alleviate malnutrition.

The Asia-Pacific region has been affected by the food price increases of 2007 and 2008, followed by the financial and economic crisis in late 2008 and early 2009. While the final impacts of these crises are still being projected, there is reason to believe that the momentum towards the 2015 goals has been weakened. The recession has increased the vulnerability of poor households and led to rising child malnutrition, which may slow down efforts to achieve not only UPE, but all the other MDGs as well. Marginalized groups are those suffering the worst from the crisis, which has also aggravated the impact of natural disasters such as floods and cyclones.³² Indeed, even when economic growth has been possible, inequalities continue to grow.³³

UNESCO is monitoring the impact of the crisis on the education sector of its Member States. It undertook a quick study in 50 countries in March 2009, produced case studies for 12 countries in mid-2009, and carried out assessments of how schools and households were affected by budget cuts in November 2009 to reveal the impact of the crisis on education. Country case studies reveal that, for the moment, most governments have protected their education budgets (the share of education expenditure in government finance). The resilience of the economies of the Asia-Pacific region – even those affected directly by conflict or post-conflict situations such as Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, and lately Pakistan – has somewhat mitigated the effects of the crisis. At the same time, the studies (for instance in Mongolia and Pakistan) indicate that vulnerable households face difficulties in meeting school costs, forcing children to be moved to cheaper schools or public institutions that provide food or material. There are a growing number of reports suggesting a rise in absenteeism, school dropouts and increased child labour. In some countries, educational quality and equity in public schools are being jeopardized. Demand for education is likely to be affected due to a decline in household income and an increase in families' contributions to rising indirect and direct schooling costs. Furthermore, it is feared that international aid, already insufficient before the crisis, will further decline as a result of the crisis.

Discussion points:

- Despite the overall progress made in the region in reaching MDG 1, what are the key challenges in helping the marginalized overcome poverty? And what role can education play?
- How can investment within the education sector be better targeted to support poverty reduction? What can be done to promote investment in education as part of national development strategies?
- How can regional cooperation in the field of education be strengthened to assist South and West Asia in meeting MDG 1?

³¹ United Nations (2010). *World Development Report 2010*. UN: New York. p. 228. <http://www.un.org/wdr2010>

Table 5: MDG 4 (child mortality) indicators & relationship with education level

Country/ Education Level of women*	Indicator 1: Under- five mortality rate (number of children per 1000 live births)	Indicator 2. Infant mortality rate
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mortality rate

knowledge and skills and can encourage positive behaviours, lowering the risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV. Through empowerment, increased access to equitable and quality education reduces vulnerability to HIV. As a result of well-established educational benefits, approximately 700,000 new infections would have been prevented every year through the achievement of UPE.⁴⁷ Education has been recognized by UNAIDS as a key element of effective HIV prevention, and new strategies aimed at HIV prevention in the education sector are increasingly focused on comprehensive sexuality education. Even in the absence of HIV-specific interventions, education offers an important measure of protection against HIV. In

protective benefits. One study, covering 32 countries, found that women

The Asia-Pacific region is both on track and regressing on MDG Goal 7 on ensuring environmental sustainability. On certain indicators – such as ensuring a proportion of protected areas to maintain bio-diversity, reducing consumption of ozone-depleting substances, and halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water – the region is an early achiever. However, on indicators such as forest area coverage and CO2 emissions, the entire region is either regressing or showing limited progress.

Education is at the heart of the long-term solution for environmental sustainability. Quality and relevant education programmes enable children, youth and adults to better understand local environments, manage waste, preserve and manage ecosystems, design greener technologies, change consumption and production patterns, and anticipate future ecological threats. They equip people with the knowledge, skills, values and behaviours needed for sustainability.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) addresses key issues, such as poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, climate change, gender equality, corporate social responsibility and protection of indigenous cultures. It aims to change the way we think, behave, look at the world, interact with nature and address social, economic and environmental problems. Governments are realizing the urgent need to take action in these areas. According to a recent survey, 79 countries, of which 13 are in the Asia,

secondary schools in China have been actively engaged in learning about and protecting the Yangtze River as part of an ESD project. The students proposed a policy change to better protect the river that was approved by the local government. This is just one example of learning by doing and changing mindsets and behaviour – not only of the students, but of the community at large. Such positive outcomes of school-based activities give hope for even larger and more beneficial environmental education policies.

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ANNEX I. Millennium Development Goals

- **Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**
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- *Indicators*
 - 5.1 Maternal mortality ratio
 - 5.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
- Target 5.B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health
- *Indicators*
 - 5.3 Contraceptive prevalence rate

- *Indicators*
7.10 Proportion of urban population living in slums

- **Goal 8. Develop a global partnership for development**

Some of the indicators listed below are monitored separately for the least developed countries (LDCs), Africa, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

- Target 8.A: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system
Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction - both nationally and internationally
- Target 8.B: Address the special needs of the least developed countries
Includes: tariff and quota free access for the least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction
- Target 8.C: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly)
- Target 8.D: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term

ANNEX II. Education for All (EFA) Goals

Goal 1. Expanding and improving comprehensive [early childhood care and education](#), especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Goal 2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory [primary education](#) of good quality.

Goal 3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate [learning and life skills](#) programmes.

Goal 4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult [literacy](#) by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

Goal 5. Eliminating [gender](#) disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and in all levels of education by 2015, with equal quality.

ANNEX III. Regional classification of Education for All Global Monitoring Report

East Asia

Brunei Darussalam

Cambodia

China

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Indonesia

Japan

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