



Asia and the Pacific
End-of-Decade Notes on Education for All Progress:
Youth and Adult Literacy (Goal 4)

Key objectives of EDN Goal 4 on Literacy

§1.1

- Take stock of progress made in literacy in the Asia-Pacific region
- Identify the remaining gaps, challenges, and issues
- Review salient experiences, innovative practices and effective strategies to promote literacy
- Generate ideas, recommendations and actions for achieving EFA Goal 4 among Asia-Pacific countries

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Content of EDN Goal 4 on Literacy

ToC

1. Introduction
2. Literacy in the Asia-Pacific Region
3. Disparities in Literacy
4. Major Literacy Initiatives
5. Literacy Policies and Deliveries
6. Prospects for Achieving the EFA Literacy by 2015
7. Recommendations

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EFA literacy goal and where are we?

§1.1

EFA goal 4 on literacy:

“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”

But:

- World adult literacy rate rose from 81.8 percent to 83.4 percent between 2000-2008: **Too little and too slow to reach 90.9 percent?**
- Adult illiterates worldwide increased from 792 to 796 millions : **Fast population growth? Inadequate UPE? Poor literate environment?**
- Women continue to account for two thirds (64%) of illiterates: **Priority target group? Who else? How to reach them?**
- Asia-Pacific region is home to 65% of the world’s illiterate adults; more than half of them (around 412 million) live in South and West Asia: **Major literacy acceleration required? How?**

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Literacy Matters:

§1.3 Chart 1

- Literacy is a key condition for empowerment, reducing poverty and achieving all the Millennium Development Goals - e.g. Negative relationship between adult literacy rate and the percentage of population living on below one US dollar based on purchasing power parity (PPP).
- Literate individuals are more familiar about family planning, HIV/AIDS, proper nutrition, immunization and other health concerns – e.g. Negative relationship between literacy rate and mortality rate among children under five years old.
- Children who are malnourished have more difficulty learning in their early years. Poor parents are also less likely to read to their children or encourage early learning in the household – e.g. Negative relationship between literacy rate and children under five years old moderately or severely underweight.

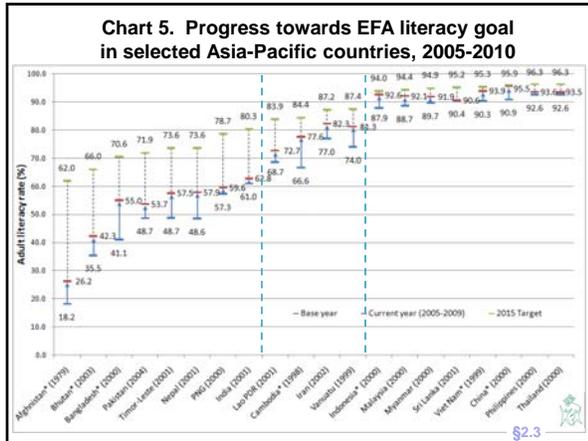
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Literacy in the Asia-Pacific Region

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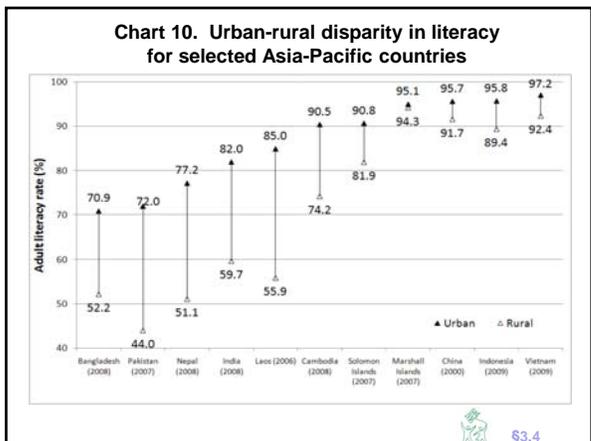
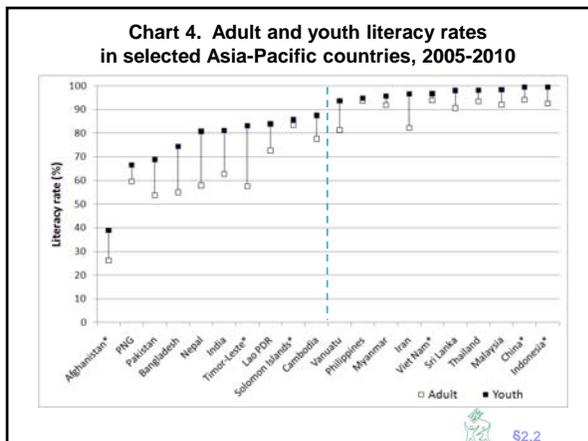
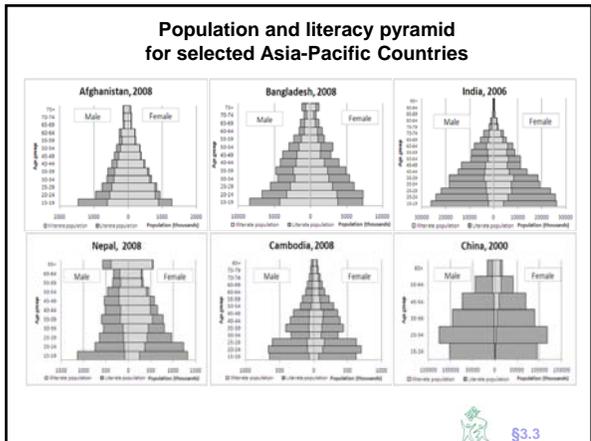
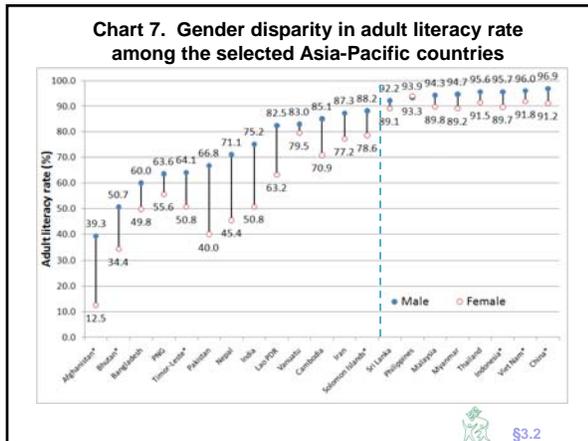
- Huge disparities in adult literacy rate among Asia-Pacific countries (>97 percent down to 26 percent)(see Chart 2).
- India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh have the biggest adult illiterate populations, totaling 438 million in 2006(see Chart 3).
- Spreading literacy in Asia-Pacific is key to accelerating achievement of EFA Goal 4 in the world(see Table 1).
- At least 10 Asia-Pacific countries lagging behind EFA literacy goal(see Chart 5).
- Target 184 million adult illiterates in Asia-Pacific(see Chart 6).
- To prioritize women, economically active persons, the poor, rural areas, ethnic/linguistic minorities, migrants, etc.

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Disparities in Literacy

- **Gender disparities:** Reducing gender gaps in literacy essential to overall rise in literacy rates (see Chart 7).
- **Disparities by age-group:** Three-pronged approach needed: (1) UPE to stem illiteracy among children; (2) literacy programmes for illiterate youth and adults; (3) create literate environment (see Charts 9 and 4).
- **Urban-rural literacy disparities:** Low rural literacy diluting achievements made in the urban areas to raise literacy levels (see Charts 10-12).
- **Ethnic and linguistic variations:** Minority ethnic/linguistic groups and disadvantaged social groups are most vulnerable to missing educational opportunities (see Tables 7-8 and Charts 13-14).
- **Economic variation in literacy:** Very strong literacy-wealth relationship (see Table 9 and Chart 15).



Major International Literacy Initiatives

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- **United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD):** Promote policy change emphasizing community participation and flexible literacy programmes linked to poverty reduction.
- **Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE 2006-2015):** To strengthen partnerships, co-ordination and synergy among literacy stakeholders within 35 countries (9 in Asia-Pacific).
- **Capacity Development for Education for All (CapEFA):** Extra-budgetary programme to support capacity building activities for EFA in selected countries (10 in Asia-Pacific).
- All 3 initiatives complement each other to implement EFA Goal 4.
- **Key strategies: development of broader framework of literacy; strengthening partnerships and coordination; improving delivery mechanisms; and developing monitoring and evaluation.**

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Literacy Policies and Deliveries

§5.1

- **Strong political commitment and appropriate policies in literacy as pre-conditions.**
 - India developed strong political commitment to accelerate its literacy drive: The Saakshar Bharat Programme.
 - Lao PDR and Cambodia included literacy into their country's SWAP.
 - NFE Policies and Action Plans in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan
 - China: 12 ministries led by the MOE issued in 2007 the 'Proposal on Further Strengthening Literacy Implementation'.

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Literacy Policies and Deliveries

§5.2

- **There is a need to strengthen and spread capacities for related policy analysis, research, formulation and strategic planning among stakeholders particularly at decentralized levels.**
 - Major coordinated actions in literacy policy-making and planning in Afghanistan; being decentralized.
 - Policies and strategies for minorities, women, and literacy are closely informed by and involving relevant sectors in China.
 - Coordination meetings organized regularly in Indonesia with all literacy-related ministries.
 - Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Lao PDR, Nepal and Cambodia have initiated pilot projects to develop NFE-MIS.
 - Mongolia, Viet Nam and Lao PDR implementing Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP) to assess literacy skills.

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Literacy Policies and Deliveries

§5.3

- **Strengthening literacy delivery mechanisms**
 1. Literacy programmes which directly respond to learners' needs can help to improve access and participation:
 - More female participation in literacy learning programmes in Lao PDR, Nepal and Bhutan.
 - In Nepal, 1,000,000 people have been provided literacy during 2001-2007, but still more than 7 million illiterates.
 2. ICT-based literacy programmes for literacy drive.
 - Literacy retention through mobile phone technologies in Pakistan: 90% of learners failed after the 1st month but 86% passed the exam in the 4th month.
 - In India, the Tata Computer-Based Functional Literacy programme teaches reading skills by using computer software, animated graphics, and multimedia presentations.

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Literacy Policies and Deliveries

§5.3

- **Strengthening literacy delivery mechanisms (contd.)**
 3. Mother-tongue based literacy programmes for non-national language speaking groups.
 - Such programmes have been developed and implemented in countries of South East Asia, South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific.
 - Yet to see such initiatives in Central Asia.
 4. Community Learning Centres (CLC) to increase participation in literacy and continuing education, particularly among the poor.
 - In Indonesia, participation in CLC literacy programmes empower community members to get a job.
 - In Viet Nam, the government strongly promote CLCs, resulting in dramatic expansion of lifelong learning opportunities from 250,000 in 2001 to 6,300,000 in 2005.

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Literacy Policies and Deliveries

§5.5

- **Relatively small budgets have been provided for literacy work: Just above 1% of total education budget.**
 - After the launch of UNLD, increased allocation of government budget for literacy occurred in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, and Nepal.
- **Better costing and financing of literacy actions needed in countries of Asia and the Pacific.**
 - GCE/AA recommended literacy unit cost benchmark between \$50 to \$100 per learner.
 - In Nepal, the unit cost per learner for basic literacy programme was only about \$12.

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Literacy Policies and Deliveries

\$5.6

- **Human resources for literacy:**
 - Significant increase in literacy staff reported by Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Pakistan.
 - The Saakshar Bharat Programme of India includes a comprehensive human resource development for literacy:
 1. Training by using learner-centred, learning-by-doing, and participatory techniques
 2. Total Quality Management
 3. Cascade approach in training of literacy personnel
 4. Distribution of model manuals and resource books
 5. Ongoing training and workshops of key resource persons
 6. Orientation and managerial training for literacy managers

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Prospects for Achieving EFA Literacy Goal by 2015

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- Literacy remains the most neglected among EFA goals.
- Progress made but the sheer size of the illiterate population in Asia and the Pacific is still a major challenge.
- Stronger political will and effective implementation actions are required to decisively fight illiteracy.
- It is time for more balanced ODA in support of all EFA goals especially literacy.
- Affirmative action is needed to effectively address socio-cultural barriers and multiple obstacles faced by illiterates.
- Consistently upgrading schooling access and quality, expanding literacy programmes for youth and adults, and promoting environment for lifelong learning are the key.

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EDN Literacy Recommendations

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- Establish/reinforce literacy coordination mechanisms at national and decentralized levels;
- Update literacy situation analysis using the latest population census data, and literacy partnership mapping;
- Formulate Country Literacy Acceleration Plans (CLAPs) and integrate them into national development plans and strategies.
- Mobilize adequate funding for literacy from all sources.
- Increase post-literacy and continuing education programmes to sustain literacy skills and promote lifelong learning.
- Strengthen research and capabilities of literacy and NFE personnel in conducting literacy needs assessment, policy analysis and formulation, strategic planning, partnership building, coordinating networks, promoting innovations, facilitating sharing of experiences and resources, monitoring and evaluation.

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Recommendation : Use the 3-pronged approach to literacy

1. Universal quality basic education for girls & boys

Reducing fees
Teachers
Gender
Inclusion and language
Health and nutrition
Public spending

2. Scale up youth & adult literacy programmes

National coordination
Partnerships
Literacy educators
Good curricula
Language policy
Public spending

3. Develop rich literate environments

School textbooks
Local language
Newspapers
Book publishing
Public broadcasting
Libraries
Access to information

Strong political commitment is the starting point

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