

# Situation Analysis of SDG 4 with a Gender Lens

## Target 4.7



By 2030, ensure all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Target 4.7 envisions education for sustainable societal transformation. It calls for all people to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes vital for peaceful and sustainable societies. The target encompasses Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as well as Global Citizenship Education (GCE). To fulfil this target, themes such as education for peace and non-violence, human rights, health and sexuality, sustainable lifestyles and cultural diversity must be integrated into curricula, teaching, assessments and policies. Gender equality is implicit in the target, but countries may need to be more conscious about it and be explicit in the way gender perspective is integrated at all stages of implementation, from education policy and

planning to the classroom and to monitoring and in the lessons learned.

### 1 Analysis and Overview

#### Gender equality is often underrepresented

The global indicator for 4.7 measures the *extent to which GCE and ESD are mainstreamed in policies, curricula, teacher education and student assessments*. The target encourages the holistic integration of concepts, such as human rights or gender equality, into teaching and learning.

Many of the concepts identified in the target appear in curricula in the Asia-Pacific region (UNESCO

IBE, 2016). Among 24 countries, national curricula address the concepts of *human rights*, *sustainable development*, *global citizenship* and *gender equality* (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> For example, *human rights and sustainable development* appear in the curricula of 88% of countries. In contrast, about half of the countries reviewed (46%) made no mention of *gender equality* in their curricula.

An analysis of the prevalence of ESD and GCED-related terms and phrases in education policies and curricula in 22 Asian countries (Figure 2), found terms related to *human rights*, *environmental sustainability* or *good health and well-being* were reported widely (UNESCO MGIEP, 2017).<sup>2</sup> Terms related to *gender equality* were few and far between compared to other concepts. In Lao PDR and Viet Nam, terms related to gender equality were relatively frequent. In Cambodia, related terms were moderately prevalent in the curriculum. Even when

taking into account terms related to gender equality, as they might exist in the national language or as expressed by alternative terms, *gender equality* as a learning topic ranks at the bottom of the list of ESD or GCED concepts included in curricula.

### Social studies as a vehicle for gender equality

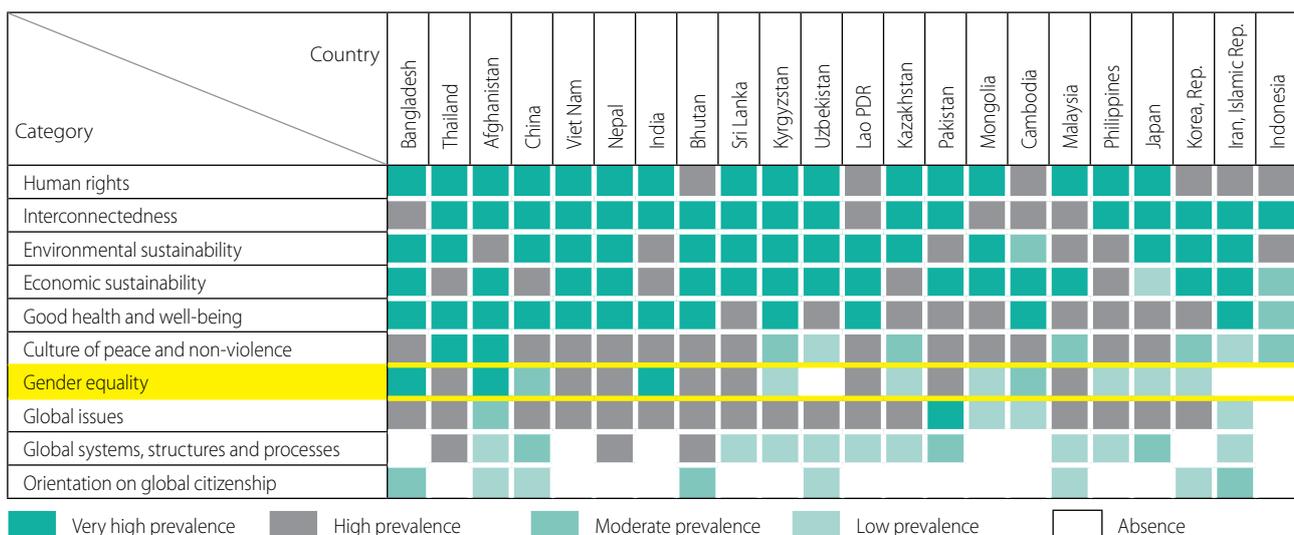
Education can empower both boys and girls and help shape them into gender aware citizens. In Cambodia, the national Basic Education Curriculum on Social Studies (2006) does this by providing guidance on how to foster gender equality-related learning outcomes. For example, in Grade 7 (Box), *Learning Outcomes* address the impact of gender-based judgment and the importance of overcoming gender biases. Learning contents are directed at exploring the meaning of the terms *gender* and *sex*, instances where gender is the basis of discrimination and ways to deal with gender-based stereotypes.

Figure 1: Percentage of countries in Asia-Pacific that have covered different concepts in national curricula, most recent year available between 2005 and 2015



Note: Key terms included in the overarching category of gender equality are: gender equality, gender equity, empowerment of girls/women, gender sensitive(ity).  
Source: GEM Report 2016 with data from UNESCO IBE, 2016.

Figure 2: Prevalence of concepts related to Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship in national education policies and curricula among 22 Asian countries, 2017



Note: Terminologies in the category gender equality referred to: gender equality, gender equity, gender parity, sex ratio, gender balance, gender roles, gender norms, gender socialization, empowerment of women/girls and other.  
Source: UNESCO MGIEP, 2017.

1 Curricula refer to primary education, lower secondary education or both. The degree of inclusion of a concept in curricula is assessed as 'low' if 1 to 4 of the 10 items are covered; 'medium' if 5 to 7 items are covered; 'high' if 8 to 10 items are covered or 'none' if no key term is included. For the details, see: UNESCO IBE, 2016. Global Monitoring of Target 4.7: Themes in National Curriculum Frameworks. Background paper prepared for the 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report, pp.37. Paris, UNESCO.

2 For the constituent concepts of the individual key terms, see: UNESCO MGIEP, 2017. Rethinking Schooling for the 21st Century: The State of Education for Peace, Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship in Asia, p.238-247. New Delhi, UNESCO MGIEP.

## Untapped female potential

Under Target 4.7 *proficiency in knowledge of environmental science and geoscience* reflects on the capability of young people to understand environmental issues from a scientific perspective. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), in 2015, indicated that in some countries from Asia-Pacific relatively few students possessed at least a minimum proficiency in science-related subjects (OECD, 2016). Even so, data from Asian countries that participated in the PISA survey show that 15-year-old boys often outperform girls in the top categories (proficiency levels five and six). In every country, girls between the proficiency levels two and four scored averaged higher scores than boys.<sup>3</sup> Despite the strong performance of girls in the study, their results do not translate into higher education and career in the sciences. Many young women lose interest in or lack the motivation required to pursue the sciences (UNESCO, 2017). In short, the region's female potential in the sciences is mostly dormant.

## 2 Issues and Challenges

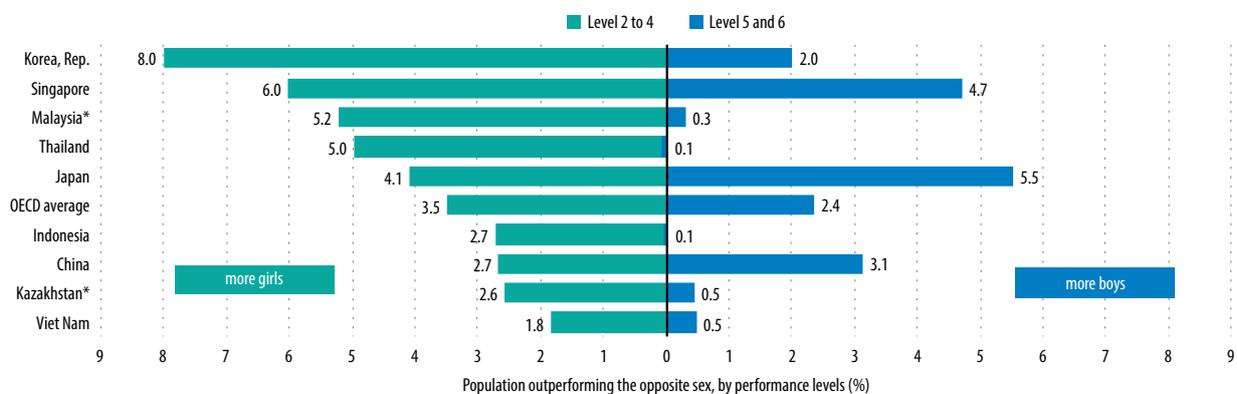
### Learning and teaching gender equality

Gender equality as a learning and teaching topic has yet to be integrated fully into education, despite decades of efforts to mainstream this concept. Gender equality appears as an administrative requirement; the boys and girls have fair and unbiased access to learning. As is the case with human rights education, the goal of gender equality in education is to instill an unbiased attitude in every child, youth and adult, and prevent discrimination based on gender.

### Gender stereotyping undermines science achievements

According to the PISA survey, girls appear to score better than boys in sciences, except in the top proficiency categories. It is also girls who often decide against pursuing further education and careers related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Attitudes and stereotypes about gender roles negatively influence girls and

**Figure 3:** Population of 15-years-olds outperforming the opposite sex, by proficiency level and sex, 2015.



Note: Note: Coverage for Kazakhstan and Malaysia is stated as 'too small'. The population in these countries may not represent a fully comparable picture. China refers to Beijing, Shanghai and Jiangsu. Source: OECD, PISA 2015 Database, Table I.2.5.

**Box:** Excerpt from 2006 Social Studies Learning Outcomes and Content, Grade 7, Cambodia

Social Studies Grade 7 Learning Outcomes		Social Studies Grade 7 Content Topic 1: Relationship with others	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify common stereotypes related to gender and explain the effect this can have on people's lives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain the importance of and suggest ways to improve the protection of the human rights of particular groups of people including girls and women</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain the difference in meaning between the terms 'gender' and 'sex' and give examples</li> <li>Give an example of the negative impact that gender discrimination can have on the lives of men and women and boys and girls</li> <li>Give examples of current gender stereotypes</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify some steps that individuals, families and communities can take to ensure gender stereotypes do not limit the chance for people to achieve their full potential</li> <li>Give examples of the ways in which women and girls can be discriminated against because of their sex</li> </ol>

Note: This example does not intend to reflect on the degree with which the term gender equality is mainstreamed in the country as it is limited to one subject only. Source: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> For each proficiency level benchmark, see: OECD, 2016. PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education. Paris: OECD Publishing.

women in the pursuit of STEM-related opportunities (see UNESCO, 2017). These biases, particularly when expressed by parents, have a strong influence on the participation of girls in STEM-related studies and their learning achievements (ibid.).

### 3 Recommendations

#### Nurture global citizenship

Integrate the topic of gender equality using several different methods, such as whole school approaches, cross-curricular topics, linking equality to the study of social and natural sciences, or teach it as a stand-alone subject. In the classroom, teachers should embody the principle of gender equality, acting as role models for students and others. GCED provides a framework aimed at equipping learners with core competencies that support equality, dignity and respect. For example, students learn to use cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, to be able to assess problems from multiple perspectives, and non-cognitive skills such as empathy and teamwork when interacting with people of different backgrounds.

#### Provide Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and promote initiatives to reduce school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV)

Education is an essential socializing mechanism, and a vehicle for transforming individual behaviors and broader social norms around violence, gender equality and discrimination.

Evidence shows that CSE, a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive,

emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality, enables children and young people to develop accurate and age appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills, including respect for human rights, gender equality and diversity (UNESCO, 2018).

In Asia and the Pacific, where violence against children is widespread, a whole-school approach, encompassing interventions and messaging across curriculum, policies and school practice, are critical to address SRGBV (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016). This strategy includes piloting new curricula and tools such as the Connect with Respect resource (developed by UNGEI partners, 2015) that address SRGBV using a human rights-based approach.

#### Mind the GAP: Promote understandings and actions in education for a sustainable environment

Education about the environment is indispensable if citizens are to adopt sustainable behaviour. The UNESCO Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD is driving the global effort to promote a holistic understanding of the interconnectedness of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability. Schools and other educational institutions are the ideal settings to connect sciences with sustainable behaviour. By linking ESD to the study of science, schools can revitalize interest and participation in science-related subjects, and stimulate better learning outcomes among girls and boys, especially as interest in science wanes. The GAP, which looks beyond schools to the local community, can create bridges of influence to help young women, in particular, challenge societal perception.

### References

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These data sheets are a first step in strengthening the gender lens in analyses of data.

More disaggregated and nested analyses can result in more specific and nuanced recommendations.

