



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Education
2030

Asia-Pacific Overview: Sustainable Development Goal 4

TARGET

4.3



1. Defining Target 4.3

Target 4.3: By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

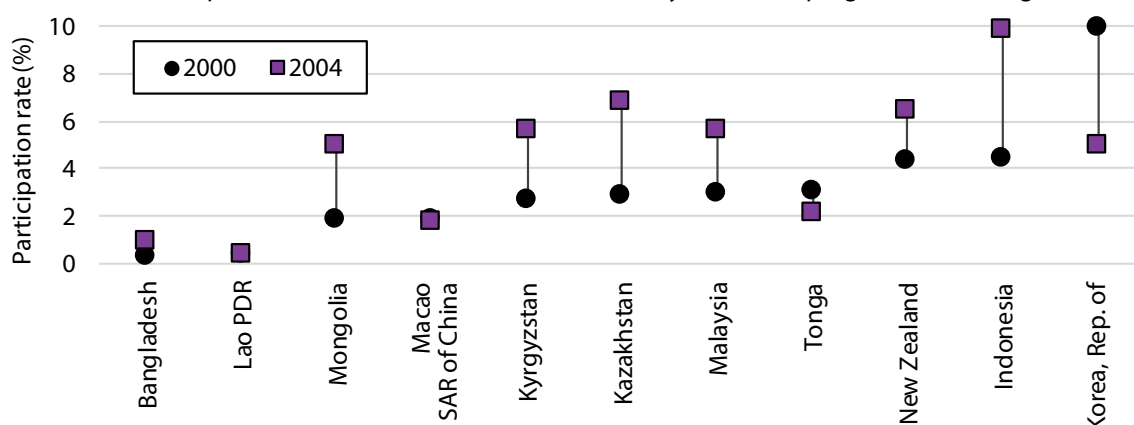
- **Equal access** means addressing disparities in access to tertiary education with regards to gender, social, regional and ethnic background, and based on age or disability.
- **All women and men** means enabling everyone to continue to improve and adapt their skills, with particular attention to gender equality including the elimination of gender-based barriers.
- **Affordable** means ensuring there are innovative ways to assist families and learners in overcoming financial obstacles to technical, vocational and tertiary education.
- **Quality** means that technical, vocational and tertiary education have strong links between science and policy developments to **keep pace with changing contexts and remain relevant**, develop effective partnerships, in particular between the public and private sectors, and include employers and unions in their implementation. This gives students the capacity to apply their knowledge in their **careers and communities**.

2. Regional and Sub-Regional Overview: Target 4.3

Participation rates in secondary TVET programmes ranged from 0.3 to 10 per cent.

Even though there were 32 million students in the region who enrolled in secondary technical and vocational secondary education and training (TVET) programmes in 2014, an increase by 52 per cent since 2000, participation in TVET is still limited in Asia and the Pacific. Indeed, the most recent data for 11 Asia-Pacific countries show that the participation rate of youth, 15 to 24 years old, in secondary TVET programmes ranged from only 0.3 per cent to 10 per cent (see Figure 1). For most of the countries, their rates have increased since 2000. The share of secondary students who enrolled in TVET programmes varies by sub-region. While the share of students in secondary TVET programmes was 17.5 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific, the figure was only two per cent in South and West Asia in 2014. Secondary TVET programmes attract more boys than girls in all sub-regions.

FIGURE 1: Participation rate, technical vocational secondary education programmes (%) (Age 15-24)



Note: 2014 data for Kazakhstan refer to 2015, for Bangladesh and Korea, Rep. of to 2013.

Source: Created by UIS-AIMS, UNESCO Bangkok, UNESCO eAtlas for Education 2030, accessed in September 2016

Tertiary Enrolment Growth:

The Asia-Pacific region has made great leaps in access to tertiary education over the past decade; the number of students in tertiary education increased from 39 million in 2000 to 109 million in 2014. This figure accounted for 53 per cent of global tertiary students. Gross enrolment ratios (GER) of tertiary education have improved across Asia and the Pacific since 2000 (see Figure 2).

The most significant growth was seen in East Asia and the Pacific, where the ratio increased by 24 percentage points from 15 per cent in 2000 to 39 per cent in 2014. The rapid expansion of tertiary education in the region has seen a **reversed gender gap**.

In 2000, in many parts of Asia and the Pacific, more men participated in tertiary education. However, the participation of women has increased more rapidly than the participation of men in recent years. In 2014, the GPI for the GER of tertiary education showed that more women were enrolled in tertiary education in Central Asia (GPI=1.06) and East Asia and the Pacific (1.12), while still more men were enrolled in tertiary education in South and West Asia (0.93).

“ Asia-Pacific represents **over 50%** of total global tertiary enrolment ”

TABLE 1: Gross enrolment ratio, tertiary (%)

SUB-REGION	2000		2014	
	%	GPI	%	GPI
World	19	0.99	34	1.11
Central Asia	22	0.98	26	1.06
East Asia and the Pacific	15	0.84	39	1.12
South and West Asia	9	0.64	23	0.93

Source: Created by UIS-AIMS, UNESCO Bangkok, UIS Data Centre, accessed in September 2016

“ Disadvantages for female students **persist** in low-income countries, and are **emerging** for males in high-income countries. ”

Issues and Challenges

There are a number of important challenges related to Target 4.3, such as:

- » **Data collection:** Due to the diversity of TVET provision, institutional arrangements and its definition, data collection through national statistical systems is difficult and may capture only a partial picture of TVET. At the tertiary level, the coordination of data collection can also be challenging in some countries as multiple ministries and authorities manage higher education institutions.
- » **Significant regional variation in enrolment:** Despite the overall regional progress, some countries lag behind others in terms of access to tertiary education. Among countries where the latest data are available, the GER of tertiary education varied from nine per cent to 95 per cent.
- » **Low participation rates in secondary TVET programmes:** Despite the importance of human resources for developing industries in the region, many key stakeholders do not yet understand it. This can lead to low participation rates in secondary TVET programmes, together with the second rate image of TVET compared to academic tracks.
- » **Asia-Pacific's knowledge gap:** As noted in the Education 2030 Framework for Action, opportunities for access to higher levels of education are often insufficient, particularly in least developed countries, resulting in a **knowledge gap** with serious consequences for social and economic development. This issue is especially challenging for Asia-Pacific because, the region represents over 50% of 2014's total global tertiary enrollment (UIS, 2016).
- » **Need for affordable and flexible lifelong learning:** In Asia-Pacific, there are more than 220 million youth who are not in school, training or employment (UNDP, 2016). This underlines the need for affordable and flexible learning pathways as part of a properly regulated tertiary education system that is supported by **technology, open educational resources and distance education**. In this regard, there is an ongoing need to ensure quality assurance, comparability and recognition of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education.

Closing the knowledge gap and expanding access is at the heart of Target 4.3. Affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university can impart work relevant skills, stimulate critical thinking, and generate the knowledge needed for sustainable social, cultural, and economic development.

3. Lessons Learned and the Way Forward

» Investing in quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

Shifts in the global economy, information technology, and global trade have made advanced skills and services vital for economic growth. Formal TVET programmes and other modes of tertiary education, including distance education are spaces for learning advanced skills, including for adult learners. Investments in effective programmes that ensure equal access can help close the knowledge gap in Asia-Pacific. Development agencies should continue to support quality technical, vocational and tertiary education as a means for promoting national and economic development throughout Asia and the Pacific.

» Emphasis on TVET programmes, particularly at secondary level

Considering the critical role of TVET in the development of a variety of industries, it is important to emphasize TVET programmes, particularly at secondary level so that business and industry can recruit well trained staff, both male and female. The policy designed to expand TVET programmes at secondary level for Member States needs to be aligned with policies aimed at changing the public image of TVET.

» Research to contribute to evidence-based policy

Evidence-based policy uses the rigor of research to inform best practices and propose scientifically grounded policy actions. For example, more research is warranted to better understand the linkages among economic plans, skills required for employability in changing labour markets, and scope and relevance of technical, vocational and tertiary education in order to guide reforms and investments in this sector, particularly at secondary TVET level.

UNESCO's Five Functions cultivate evidence-based policy through research exchange, standard setting, capacity building, facilitating international cooperation and serving as a laboratory of ideas. Evidence based policy research is often conducted in the tertiary education system, particularly research intensive universities. Therefore, it is necessary for development agencies to support technical, vocational and tertiary education in order to fund **policy-relevant research**, including action research and **make knowledge on quality education available in a usable form for policy-makers**.

» Integrating strategies

Integration means that supporting one strategy will simultaneously advance other strategies. Tertiary education is integrated into development strategies as it can impart **mindsets, skills, and knowledge** necessary to make a sustainable change. Exemplifying strategy integration, efforts to achieve Target 4.3 will advance other targets such as **reducing inequality, and promoting decent work, economic growth, and gender equality**. Similarly, UNESCO's initiatives on student-centered learning will contribute to goals regarding student mobility and lifelong learning. Integrating strategies both within a single agency and between agencies promotes collaboration, reduces duplication, maximizes impact, and promotes sustainable development.

4. Global and Regional Documents Linked to Target 4.3

- Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel, UNESCO, 1997
- World Conference on Higher Education: Communiqué, UNESCO, 2009
- Transforming TVET: Building skills for work and life. The Shanghai Consensus, UNESCO, 2012
- Recommendation Concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training, UNESCO, 2015
- Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Quality Education and Skills Development for Sustainable Future, UNESCO, 2015
- Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (2011 Tokyo Convention), UNESCO, 2011
- Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education, UNESCO, 2015
- Enhancing Relevance in TVET Review of Progress in the Asia-Pacific since 2012. Bangkok, UNESCO, 2016

References

- World Bank (2016), Gross enrolment ratio, tertiary, both sexes (%).
- UNDP. (2016). Asia-Pacific Human Development Report: Sharing the Future. New York.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). (2016). UIS Data Centre (website).