

Chapter II: Education and Illiteracy

This chapter addresses education in ESCWA member countries and includes data on student enrolment at various levels, teaching staff, adult and youth illiteracy rates and other related indicators. Definitions of education levels are based on the 1997 version of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED97). Data cover public and private education; students studying abroad are not included in this analysis.

Table II-1 presents adult illiteracy rates (15+ years), by sex for the period 1990-2005.

II-1

Table II-2 shows youth illiteracy rates (15-24 years) by sex for the period 1990-2005.

II-2

Table II-3 focuses on pre-primary education in ESCWA member countries, indicating the number of enrolled students and teaching staff at the pre-primary level, by sex, in addition to gross and net enrolment ratios for the period 2001-2005. While the teaching staff category includes full- and part-time teachers, it excludes staff such as administrators and librarians who do not perform teaching functions.

II-3

Table II-4 details primary education in ESCWA member countries, including the number of enrolled students and teaching staff at the primary level, by sex, and gross and net enrolment ratios for the period 2001-2005.

II-4

Table II-5 on secondary education in ESCWA member countries shows the number of enrolled students and teaching staff at the secondary level, by sex, in addition to gross and net enrolment ratios for the period 2001-2005. It also provides a breakdown for technical/vocational and general programmes.

II-5

Statistics disclose that illiteracy rates among adults (15 year and over) dropped from 50 percent to 36 percent during the period 1990 and 2005. Highest illiteracy rates for 2005 were recorded in Iraq (59 %), Yemen (47 %) and

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Egypt (41 %). Also, it should be noted that these rates were not the same among genders, where illiteracy rates among women were higher than those among men in most countries in the region, except in the United Arab Emirates. At the regional level, the illiteracy rate among women is double that of men. Also, youth (15-24 yrs) illiteracy dropped from 35 percent to 24 percent between 1990 and 2005 in the ESCWA region. Discrepancy among genders is also evident within the youth group.

Data reveal that the gap between girls' and boys' enrolment in primary education seems to be getting smaller in all ESCWA Countries.

Note

Please note that this chapter includes data on gross and net enrollment ratios for pre-tertiary educational levels obtained from UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) due to the lack of national data and methodological disparity. These ratios may be lower than those of national sources, especially for some GCC countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE.

This discrepancy is due to disparities in the population estimates of related age groups between national sources and UN sources, namely those estimates published by the UN Population Division and adopted by UIS in its calculation for these ratios, in addition to student numbers collected from national sources.