Situation Analysis of SDG 4 with a Gender Lens

Target 4.4

By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship.

Target 4.4 emphasizes the importance of equipping youth and adults with essential skills to qualify for employment, entrepreneurship and decent jobs. This target appears against a backdrop of ever-changing labour market demands, and growing youth unemployment rates since the start of the new millennium (E2030 FFA, 2016). While linked to Target 4.3 on providing access to technical and vocational skills, this target emphasizes the importance of developing transversal skills, which are applied across many professions, and increasingly rely also on proficiency with modern information and communication technology (ICT).

Competencies in ICT apply to all disciplines, but Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers, in particular, rely on computers for a range of tasks, including scientific investigation, digital design, engineering simulations and information management (see UNESCO, 2017).

Equipping men and women with relevant skills for decent work will depend on increasing equitable learning opportunities to overcome gender disparities. While the specific skills youth and adults require are not defined, it is clear that gender strategies in national education policies will be necessary to fulfil Target 4.4. Teaching adolescents relevant skills will have a range of benefits, such as helping to prepare them for lifelong learning, to make informed decisions and to become global citizens (UNESCO, 2017).

1 Analysis and Overview

Women are disadvantaged in educational attainment

The benefits of education are well-established. Income rises according to the level of education completed. Individuals with more education also

tend to make better-informed decisions, for example concerning health or the environment. We also know that adult women (aged 25-64) in the region are not reaching the same levels of education compared to men (**Figure 1**). In Cambodia, three in four women have not completed primary education, compared to two in four men. The situation worsens at the secondary level. Between 9 in 10 women and 8 in 10 men have not completed lower secondary education (Figure1). Gender disparities tend to be higher in countries where educational attainment is low, as is the case in Cambodia, India or Pakistan.

Employment implications

Men and women who lack educational qualifications have limited options when it comes to their participation in the labour market. For example, in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam, up to 16% more adult women (aged 15+) are found in the agricultural sector, compared to men who are predominantly employed in the industrial sector. Given the lower levels of educational attainment among women, it is no surprise that they dominate the workforce in agriculture, which in these

countries is considered a low-skilled job. The gender gap in management positions is particularly striking. Among three countries with data, men are between 1.7 and 5 times more likely than women to be employed at the management level (**Figure 2**).

Individuals in low-skilled jobs tend to have fewer opportunities to be trained in or acquire ICT skills. Increasingly, ICTs are found in all occupations, not just office work. The trend toward digitization and automation, including in agriculture, can be a double-edged sword for workers. Individuals may either acquire ICT skills to adapt to changing labour market conditions or be forced into low-skilled work. As the agricultural sector modernizes, women are at a higher risk of unemployment or of working in poverty.

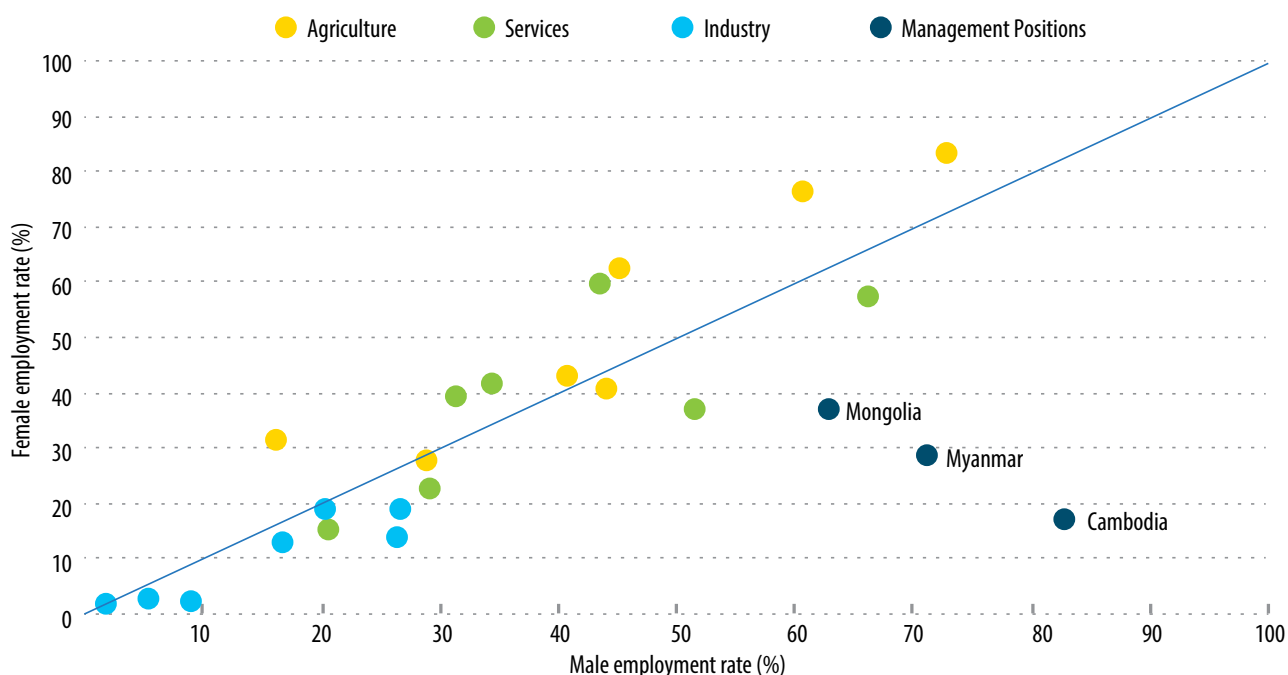## Insufficient ICT skills are a barrier to employment

While data on ICT skill-levels remain limited for countries in Asia-Pacific, surveys suggest that a significant proportion of adults are unable to handle computerized information and telecommunication technologies, even in technology-rich countries, such as Japan and the Republic of Korea (UNESCO, forthcoming).

Figure 1: Population (aged 25-64) with less than primary or less than lower secondary education in selected countries, by sex, 2016 or latest year
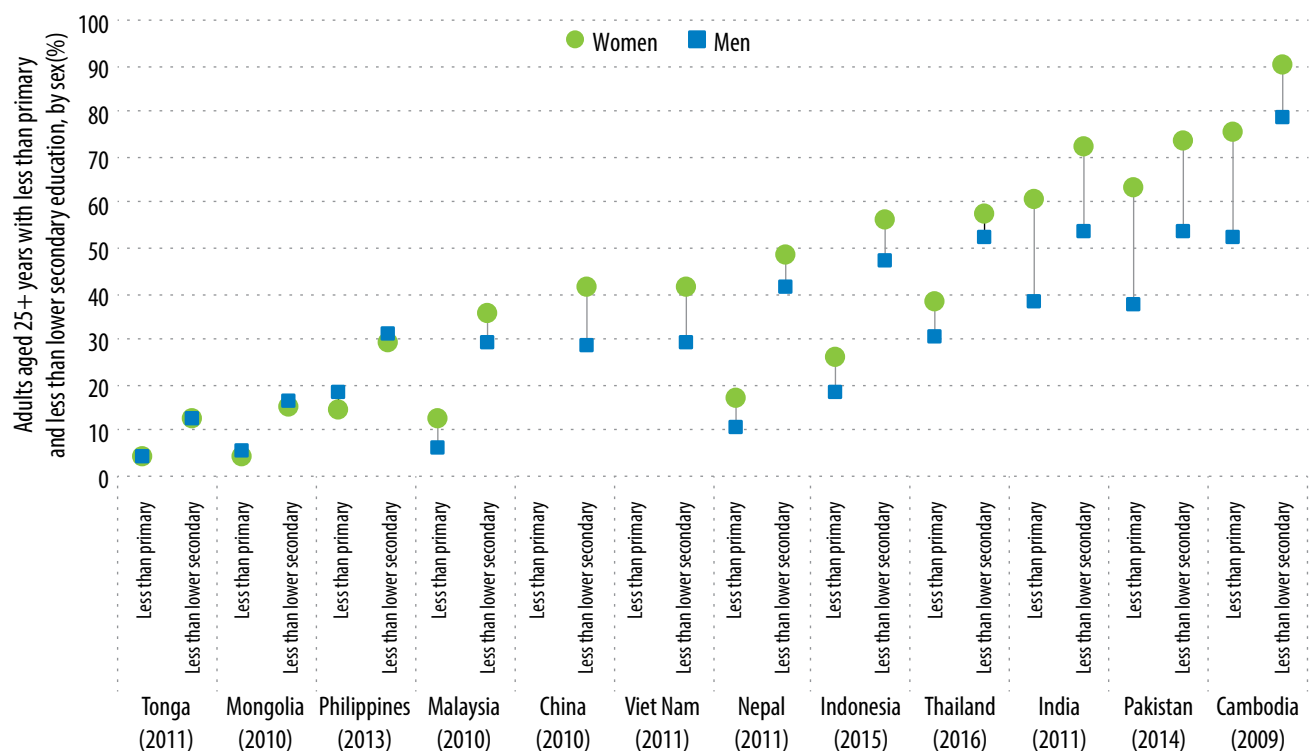

Note: Countries are ranked in ascending order by the population of women with 'less than lower secondary education'. The population for 'less than lower secondary education' contains the population for 'less than primary education'. Data on 'less than primary education' are not available for China and Viet Nam.
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) database, http://data.uis.unesco.org, [April 2018].

Figure 2: Share of men and women in employment, by sector, 2017

Legend: ● Agriculture ● Services ● Industry ● Management Positions

(Scatter plot: Male employment rate (%) on x-axis, Female employment rate (%) on y-axis. Labeled points: Mongolia, Myanmar, Cambodia)

Note: Countries with 2017 data: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Vietnam. Data for Management Positions: Cambodia (2012), Myanmar (2015), and Mongolia (2016).

Source: World Bank database based on ILOSTAT retrieved November 2017.

Figure 3: Distribution of the population (aged 15+) who indicated that a lack of computer skills prevented them getting a job, a promotion, a pay raise, or from advancing a business in Lao PDR

Rural male 10%

Rural female 10%

Urban female 47%

Urban male 33%
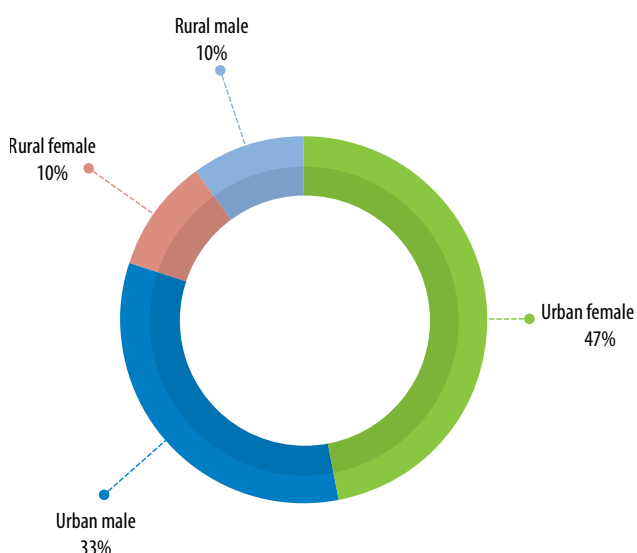
Source: Lao PDR - STEP Skills Measurement Household Survey 2012 (Wave 1) Dataset

In Lao PDR, the Skills Toward Employability and Productivity (STEP) survey, conducted in 2011, found that 30% of adults (aged 15+) had been hindered in some way by their lack of computer skills. This hindrance included, for example, being refused employment, a promotion or a pay raise. Among those who said they missed out on employment opportunities or benefits due to a lack of computer-related skills, 47% were urban females compared to 33% urban males. The majority of these respondents were from urban areas (**Figure 3**), where ICT infrastructure is generally good.

2 Issues and Challenges

An unskilled workforce will hinder sustainable development

A poorly educated population will be ill-equipped to meet the demands of the modern global economy, which in turn will cripple efforts to achieve sustainable development. More must be done to ensure that education readies future workers with ICT skills and soft skills such as analytical and

creative thinking, problem-solving, communication, teamwork and entrepreneurship, which are all in demand (ILO, 2010). Adult women, who tend to be less educated and less exposed to ICTs, are more vulnerable than men to exclusion from the changing labour market (UNESCO, forthcoming).

Women and girls lack ICT skills

Technology istypically considered a male domain, while females are discouraged from pursuing ICT-related fields by parents and teachers, in favour of traditional or household activities (Dahlberg, 2017). Discrimination and harassment in online spaces further deter them. As a result, women lack ICT skills that could translate into decent and non-vulnerable employment. Unless more is done to help women overcome these barriers, they will be unable to achieve better-earning employment now, and in the future, including management positions.

3 Recommendations

Public-private collaborations

Maximize outreach through employers, business owners and entrepreneurs in partnership with institutions, such as community learning centres and existing TVET bodies, to target specific populations, particularly women. Public-private partnerships can introduce ICTs and other job skills and profiles to relevant populations.

Promote ICT and STEM learning early

Emphasize the importance of girls learning science and technology, so they develop the confidence to pursue related careers. Starting earlier in the educational cycle will prepare girls, but also boys, for the impending digitization and automation of many jobs. Female role models can drive the vocational aspirations of girls interested in technology (see UNESCO, 2017).

Integrate ICTs in a responsible, gender-sensitive manner

Integrate the teaching of ICT skills into curricula, prepare teachers to support learning and practice in formal and non-formal contexts, and ensure equal access to high-quality learning opportunities for males and females, in collaboration with other sectors. Strengthen sector-wide approaches to ICT in education, apply a gender-equity lens, and engage early-on in responsible ICT use (see UNGEI, 2017).

Anticipate future labour market needs

Anticipate shifts in the demand for ICT and other skills, and develop training programmes that are gender sensitive. In basic education, focus on teaching core, transversal skills, especially the capacity to learn autonomously so that once in the workforce, men and women will be able to adapt to change (ILO, 2010).

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.