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**Ministerial Meeting**

**Agenda Item**

***Bridging the Development Framework Gap:  
Commonwealth Contribution to the Post-2015 Development  
Framework***

**Presentation 1: *Revisiting the Internationally Agreed Targets  
(IAGs) for Education post 2015***

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**Introduction**

The objectives of this discussion are to (i) revisit the conceptualisation of the current Internationally Agreed Goals (IAGs) for education and evaluate key elements of progress since 2000 towards, and (ii) to catalyse the process of developing Commonwealth perspectives on which goals should be retained, which might be added, and which may no longer be a priority.

The structure of the IAGs and that of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has provided a framework for investment in education for development endorsed by UN member states and has shaped the architecture of Education for All (See Annex 1). It has helped focus domestic priorities in some countries, emphasised the importance of delivering the right to education to all citizens, encouraged greater participation and gender equity, and has helped mobilise large amounts of external financing which might not otherwise have been made available. As 2015 approaches it is time to revisit what was promised, what has been achieved, and what remains to be achieved within the framework of Education for All. It also the opportunity to identify new priorities that have emerged that may suggest realignment of goals at national and international levels. If this process is successful then it can feed into the development of the UN Secretary General's education initiative to be launched in September 2012, and the various UN processes currently underway to reshape the MDGs and IAGs.

**History**

The current international goals for education have a long history. The World Conference on Education for All at Jomtien in 1990 committed countries to Education for All and developed goals which evolved to become those agreed at Dakar in 2000. These were linked in to the Millennium Development Goals which created a broad agenda for development and have become known as the IAGs for education.

Progress on the IAGs since 2000 has been impressive but has also left gaps

between those countries likely to achieve most goals, and those for whom it is clear the current deadline of 2015 is too close. The EFA Global Monitoring Report and the CCEM Conference Report "Towards and Beyond the Internationally Agreed Goals"<sup>1</sup> provide data on the status of EFA in different countries.

## **Status**

In summary (IAG1) Early Childhood Development (ECD) and pre-school provision have expanded but are widely provided privately and rationed by price. This contributes to gaps in performance between children from richer and poorer households both at entry to primary school and through its enduring effects on progress through in higher grades. Enrolment in primary school has grown dramatically in all regions (IAG2). However pockets remain with low enrolment rates amongst the poorest and other excluded groups (rural households, migrants, and in some cases girls, orphans, and social groups suffering discrimination) and some fragile states remain far from universal access. Many children attend irregularly, are seriously over-age, and fail to master basic skills by grade 6.

The learning needs of young people and adults (IAG3) remain far from being met. Access to secondary school remains heavily skewed against children from the poorest households (IAG3), who may have a fifth or even one tenth of the chance of those in the richest quintile of completing secondary school successfully. University students remain largely drawn from children from the richest two quintiles of household income in many low income countries. Adult education remains a poor relation to formal schooling in many countries. Though literacy rates have been improving in most part of the world (IAG4) this has sometimes not been as fast as population growth. New illiterates continue to enter adulthood when schooling fails to ensure all who complete primary school achieve sustained literacy.

Great progress has been made towards eliminating gendered disparities in access to primary and secondary schooling (IAG5) and most countries have Gender Parity Indices in the range 0.96 - 1.04 at primary indicating that there is only a 4% difference or less between boys and girls. Girls remain excluded disproportionately in a minority of low income countries, often those which are fragile states. In some countries girls out enrol boys, as is the case in higher education in most middle and high income countries. And in some girls enrol more at younger ages but drop out faster after puberty. Some communities continue to disadvantage girls in ways that are not captured by enrolment rates. In others young men may fail to acquire employable skills or to qualify for further education and training challenging their identity.

Investment in improving the quality of education (IAG6), most often indicated by the results of achievement tests, has been substantial but is yet to deliver gains consistent with expectations. Many countries do not have standardised assessments that allow comparisons of performance over time. Where they

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<sup>1</sup> Menefee T and Bray M 2012 Towards and Beyond the Internationally Agreed Goals. Commonwealth Secretariat

exist they show cause for concern that many fall well below national norms for learning outcomes and alarming numbers fail to read by grade 4. International tests of achievement are beginning to show striking differences in achievement and indicate the length of the journey needed to close the gaps between the richest and the poorest within and between countries.

### **Criticisms of IAGs**

Alongside these observations of progress and outstanding challenges common criticisms of the IAGs have been that:

- IAGs 2 and 5 have received more emphasis than other IAGs because of the apparent ease of converting these IAGs into measureable targets.
- Universal access to primary schooling (and now a full cycle of basic education) has been privileged over investment for development at secondary and tertiary levels.
- The IAGs do not recognise that countries are at different stages of development and that what are appropriate goals for some have already been achieved by others.
- The IAGs fail to recognise the importance of improving equity in achieving goals for universal access and making a reality of more equal opportunities that narrow the gap in participation and achievement between the richest and the poorest, and between other social groups.
- The IAGs are blind to learning achievement yet access without mastery of core competencies is no access at all.
- Gender equity has changed considerably since 2000 and gaps have reduced; new strategies may be needed to provide equal opportunities to both boys and girls.
- The IAGs are silent on investments in infrastructure, yet too many schools remain in temporary structures, without basic services including clean water and sanitation, and without adequate learning materials.
- The IAGs embed a distant relationship between target setters and target getters, ownership is more at the international than national level, and it remains unclear who is accountable for different aspects of their achievement (e.g. policy, universal participation, human and physical resources, learning processes, outcomes).
- The IAGs are a list of desirable outcomes, not a recipe for development. As a result they do not help to develop strategy or tactics for educational planning for development linked to national development aspirations and constraints.

### **Recent Developments**

Since 2000 there have been many developments which have impinged on the IAGs and their relevance. These change the context for post 2015 IAGs and include but are not limited to:

- Global financial crises that have seen unprecedented shifts in

capital between countries, recession in many rich countries, and knock on effects of loss of confidence in emerging economies leading to calls to prioritise growth over rights based approaches to development.

- Rebalancing of the geo-politics of development with the emergence of the G20, the BRICs (Brazil, India, China, and Russia), sovereign wealth funds, and different forms of international trading and finance on an unprecedented scale coupled with further integration of the global economy in goods and services.
- A much higher profile for environmental sustainability as it becomes clear that human activity may be influencing climate and that the products of economic activity increase the burden on limited planetary resources.
- Growing global concerns with cross border and internal security and the implications of mismatches between educational realities, livelihoods, labour markets, and the legitimate aspirations of youth.
- Greater temporary and permanent migration for both economic and political reasons which can redraw the map of patterns of educational investment and promote international certification and convergence of curriculum.
- Increased pressure to universalise access to secondary schooling at affordable costs as a result of increased demand from growing numbers of primary leavers and realisation that knowledge based economic growth needs more than basic education.
- Rapid growth in higher education in all but the poorest countries generating new imbalances in participation (of wealth, gender, and other social exclusions), labour market absorption, and problems of financing.
- Needs for new and better indicators of educational progress since gross and net enrolment rates can be misleading, large numbers of over-age children are currently invisible, and gender parity indices can conceal differences in the number of girls and boys in the population.

### **Continued Focus on Education**

There are many good reasons for both the IAGs and any revised MDGs to include a continued focus on educational investment. The first is that there is a road left to travel to achieve universal basic education if an expanded vision of equitable access to education is used. This should include at a minimum for all children to<sup>2</sup>:

- enrol in the year in which they become six years old or younger
- have opportunities to attend structured pre-school designed to enhance school readiness

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<sup>2</sup> An elaboration of this expanded vision and a 12 point programme to realise the vision can be found at Lewin K M, 2012, Making Rights Realities: Researching Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (download from <http://www.create-rpc.org> along with 75 other research papers on EFA)

- progress over the next six years with no more than one repetition and remain within one year of the nominal age for the grade
- attend for at least 90% of the teaching days available which should exceed 180 days a year.
- transit to lower secondary school and complete nine years of schooling
- learn in classes of no more than 40 in schools with clean water, sanitation, basic services, light, heat and ventilation, and adequate learning materials
- be taught by trained teachers who are present in class at least 95% of the teaching days available with pupil teacher ratios of 40:1 or less
- achieve at levels within two years of the norm for their grade
- experience learning unhindered by early childhood under-nutrition, stunting, and preventable and debilitating disease, in schools and other locations fit for purpose
- have equitable access to affordable schools located within 30 minutes travel of households at primary level and 60 minutes at secondary level

Those who remain excluded are disproportionately poor, female in some locations, socially/ethnically/linguistically marginalised, with disability, older, remote, rural, urban, migrants, displaced, illiterate, and in fragile States. Many are "silently excluded" by being enrolled but being poor attenders, overage, low achieving or a combination of these attributes.

If the expanded definition of access is used then the number of children without meaningful access to basic education is much larger than the 65 million cited in the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report. In addition to those who never attend (who are the minority in most countries) the numbers dropping out before completion are much greater than those listed in the age group as "out of school" since many are over-age sometimes by several years. Secondly attendance rates in low enrolment countries and regions can be as low as 50% on a daily basis and this is compounded by teacher absenteeism which can be more than 25% of teaching days in the worst cases. The proportion of children reaching defined competencies on standardised tests is only recently becoming clear. This can indicate that more than half are two or more years behind the norms for grade 6.

Taking these factors into account those out of school, or with compromised access to a complete cycle of basic education unlikely to lead to meaningful learning, almost certainly exceed 350 million globally. Figures for out of school children in Commonwealth countries need to be adjusted accordingly depending on data on late entry, over-age progression, under-achievement and failure to complete lower secondary school to capture those who are "silently excluded" as well as those nominally not enrolled.

Other key reasons for a continued focus on education in investment for development within a new IAG structure linked to the post 2015 MDGs include but are not limited to:

- First, none of the other IAGs have been achieved as intended. There remain important groups of children and adults, and groups of

countries which are challenged to realise the goals for ECD, young people and skills, literacy, gender, and improved quality. Large differences in learning outcomes remain between rich and poor children, and between countries, which will compromise poverty reduction and equitable and sustainable development.

- Second, the expansion in access that has resulted from investments in Education for All is creating demand for post primary schooling both for secondary leavers to become teachers to meet the demand at primary level, and because basic education is no longer enough to provide access to modern sector labour markets.
- Third, completed primary schooling, and participation through secondary school have measurable benefits on maternal and infant mortality, health and nutrition, the incidence of HIV and AIDS, and morbidity more generally.
- Fourth, social mobility, and reductions in households living in poverty, depends closely on investments in education that provide more access to the poor to modern sector labour markets and wage and salary employment; in all societies increased education is associated with greater income.
- Fifth, economic growth in most economies depends on investment in more rather than less capability and skill predicated on at least basic education prior to livelihoods, employment and training, with secure learning that can translate into increase productivity.
- Sixth, international competitiveness in high value added and knowledge based sectors of the economy depends on knowledge, skills and competencies associated with abstract reasoning, analysis, language and communication skills, and the application of science and technology which are most efficiently acquired through high quality secondary schooling and tertiary education and training.
- Seventh, balanced patterns of public educational investment, which recognise the basic arithmetic of youth unemployment, are needed to make most use of scarce resources, manage the opportunities and expectations of young girls and boys, and contribute to social justice and social stability.
- Eighth, as more and more children and students have opportunities to learn at higher levels investment will be needed in curricula and pedagogies that meet new needs and that are subject to the discipline of learning cost effectiveness and demand led tests of relevance and utility.
- Ninth, education budgets are usually the first or second item in national expenditure for countries not at war. New investment priorities must be accompanied by realistic appreciations of the resources available and the impossibility of universalising access to higher levels of education within costs structures typical of low and some middle income countries. Reforms are needed in costs per child, teachers salaries, and the costs to households of participation if existing and new IAGs are to be achieved.

### **Issues to be Addressed in Revisiting the IAGs**

The narrative above raises a series of issues relevant to revisiting of the IAGs.

These recognise the achievements and shortfalls to date, the criticisms that have been made of the IAGs, the changes in context that have taken place since 2000, and the reasons why educational investment must still figure prominently in new MDGs and IAGs. These factors should be considered in discussing the structure and substance of revised IAGs.

There are several options and likely outcomes related to the revision of the IAGs. Discussion of these can be provoked by outlining a number of different scenarios. These are Status Quo, Evolutionary Reform, Radical Reform, IAG Lite, IAG Heavy, IAG RPI (see Annex 2 below). Delegates are invited to elaborate on the list and add strengths and weaknesses.

## **Discussion**

The question and answer session in plenary should draw on the issues raised in the contributions to the session and reflect on the key questions listed below:

1. What changes should be made to the existing IAGs – should some IAGs be removed from the commitments and should new IAGs be added to the commitments?
2. Is it possible to enhance the links between the IAGs and national development strategies and should there be differentiation to reflect differing development contexts?
3. If the CCEM sets up a Working Group to develop a Commonwealth position on the revision of the IAGs, what should be the process and timescale?

## **Annex 1 MDGs and IAGs**

### ***Millennium Development Goals for Education***

#### **MDG2. Achieve universal primary education**

Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

#### **MDG3. Promote gender equality and empower women**

Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

### ***Education for All Goals (IAGs)***

#### **Goal 1**

Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

#### **Goal 2**

Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

#### **Goal 3**

Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.

#### **Goal 4**

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.

#### **Goal 5**

Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

#### **Goal 6**

Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

## Annex 2 IAG Scenarios (for discussion, elaboration and modification)

Scenario	Architecture	Strength	Weakness
<b>1. Status Quo</b>	IAGs retained with no significant modification except the deadlines for achievement extended (to 2025?)	Continuity and familiarity, no need to change international architectures, funding priorities remain unchanged	Reasons for lack of achievement may remain unchanged; Changing contexts and priorities ignored
<b>2. Evolutionary Reform of the IAGs</b>	Expand scope and balance of IAGs to include other education sub-sectors and more measurable outcomes with better indicators	Build on existing frameworks and achievements, expand reach and volumes of sub sector support, adapt to changes since 2000	Locked in to existing development paradigm for educational investment; missed opportunity to break from orthodox sectoral planning
<b>3. Radical Reform of the IAGs</b>	Break with the existing architecture in favour of a different set of organisers - thematic? country group based? linked to cognition, neuroscience and learning? etc?	Opportunity to "break the mould" and catalyse new patterns of investment in education and development; space for innovations to demonstrate cost effectiveness and new roles for education in development	Risks of low take up and buy in; issues of integration with post 2015 MDGs; interface with expectations of development funding agencies; stability and authenticity of new visions of development
<b>4. IAGs Lite + Regional/Country Group Targets</b>	High level goals for education sub-sectors linked to regional / group level goals that recognise context used to mobilise national and international finance etc	Allows for regional and country group variations that reflect achievements and national development strategies; promotes South-South cooperation; respects diversity	Regions and groups may find it difficult to reach consensus on IAGs; development partners superstructures may or may not map onto regions and groups
<b>5. IAGs Heavy</b>	Detailed specification of goals linked to performance indicators linked to international funding	Standardisation, clarity, efficiency in disbursement, convergence in expectations	Lack of situation specific relevance, limited resilience, divergence in aspirations
<b>6. IAGs Rest in Peace (RIP)</b>	Abandon IAG architectures Return to nationally agreed bi-lateral and multi-lateral country specific projects	Returns more control over priorities to national governments, improves accountability	Increased transaction costs, loss of harmonisation and coordination between donors; reduced ability to mobilise high level pledges

