Status update report on Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) in the Commonwealth Countries

Terms of Reference

Summary of findings to be presented at the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (20CCEM) from 19-23 February 2018 in Nadi, Fiji

1. Background

1.1 Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers

The Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) takes place on a triennial basis, with the first meeting held in Oxford in 1959. It is the 2nd largest meeting organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat following the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). CCEMs provide Commonwealth education ministers with the opportunity to discuss key education issues in the Commonwealth in relation to a specific theme. At CCEMs, ministers also share knowledge and good practices in the education sector, receive an update on actions achieved against CCEM mandates as well as identify areas of action for the next three years for education in the Commonwealth.

1.2 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (19CCEM)

The 19CCEM, ‘Quality education for equitable development: performance, paths and productivity’, was hosted by the Bahamas in June 2015. The conference was attended by 700 delegates from 38 Commonwealth countries and closely preceded the international agreement on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, allowing for discussions pertinent to the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Additionally, 19CCEM provided an opportunity for ministers to review progress made against the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) targets; deliberate on areas where member states were faced with the challenge of meeting MDGs and EFA targets; and collectively make recommendations for the advancement of education in the Commonwealth.

At 19CCEM, ministers agreed on actions for the strengthening of education in the Commonwealth, acknowledging the need for member states to have education sector plans that assist in advancing the SDGs. The main outcome of this international conference was a Ministerial Declaration – The Nassau Declaration – which highlighted the major topics and issues (e.g. early childhood education, access to
technology, gender equity, the key role of parents, teachers and civil society) discussed at the 19CCEM as well as the main remedial initiatives proposed (e.g. Lifelong Learning, Policy Frameworks, Scholarships and Research Collaborations).

Highlighting the Commonwealth’s values of equity, access and development, Ministers at 19CCEM stressed the key role of education for sustainable development, and emphasised the role of education at the heart of the process for driving forward the SDGs.

1.3 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, also known as Global Goals, build on the success of the MDGs and aim to go further to end all forms of poverty. They are a set of 17 goals and 169 targets unanimously adopted at the United Nations General Assembly Summit in September 2015. The Commonwealth has made clear its collective commitment to the achievement of the SDGs.

1.4 Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)

Whilst education outcomes cut across all SDGs, SDG4 specifically addresses education: *ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*. The goal consists of seven targets and three means of implementation (outlined in the boxes below).

SDG4 effectively replaces the education-related MDGs and EFA goals. It covers the full spectrum of education: early childhood care and education, primary, secondary, technical and vocational skills, tertiary, and adult education and learning; and acknowledges the role of education in reducing poverty and achieving other development goals.

**SDG 4 Targets:**

4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
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
4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations
4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
4.7 By 2030, ensure all learners acquire 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 cultures contribution to sustainable development
The Commonwealth Secretariat’s Strategic Plan for 2017/18 - 2020/21\(^3\) recognizes that strengthened sustainable policies reduce disparities and improve health and education outcomes. Given that education is one of the key development sectors requiring significant resources and engagement of major global partners, the Secretariat aims to focus its efforts towards policy advocacy and technical support for the development and implementation of strengthened education policies. This will better undergird the SDGs and position member states to realise the targets in line with their national agendas.

1.5 **Persistent Challenges and Emerging Issues**

Following the approval of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the rolling out of the SDGs, considerable gaps remained within the Commonwealth that required urgent attention. These included:

- Low early childhood education enrolment rates - while enrolment in early childhood education is expanding across the Commonwealth, currently only one third of children in developing Commonwealth countries access early childhood education.
- Low primary and secondary school enrolment rates - approximately 17 million primary aged children and 16 million lower secondary aged youth remain out of school in the Commonwealth.
- High numbers of illiterate adults - over 400 million adults in the Commonwealth are illiterate.
- Continued gender disparities in primary and secondary schooling - although gender discrimination towards girls has improved, approximately 3 per cent more boys than girls are enrolled in primary schools across Commonwealth countries. Notwithstanding this, in some countries, boys are underrepresented and underperforming, particularly at the secondary level\(^4\).
- Disparities in allocation of resources to education - despite the Nassau declaration reaffirmed commitment to education financing at 4-6% of GDP (or 15-20% of total public expenditure), considerable disparities remain in the allocation of resources to education within the Commonwealth.

Other global challenges faced include the following:

- Small states, which make up approximately 60% of the Commonwealth’s members, will be disproportionately affected by climate change, despite being the least contributors\(^5\);
- The education sector faces challenges in raising adequate funds to meet current demands and the ambitions of the post-2015 agenda\(^6\);

\(^3\) The Commonwealth Secretariat. 2017. The Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2017/18-2020/2021
\(^4\) Commonwealth Secretariat. 2015. Education in the Commonwealth: Quality Education for Equitable Development
Despite the significant progress made within education provision, there is still much to be done. Increasing funding to education alone is insufficient; and Rising youth unemployment is one of the most significant challenges facing economies and societies in today’s world, for developed and developing countries alike.

1.6 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (20CCEM)

Commonwealth Education Ministers will meet at 20CCEM in February 2018, in Fiji, to consider progress achieved in education in the Commonwealth since the 19CCEM. In particular, after the roll out of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the ministers will take stock of the progress so far achieved by member countries against the agreed SDG4 and deliberate on priorities and emerging issues.

The theme for 20CCEM is ‘Sustainability and Resilience: Can education deliver?’ In order to ensure the relevance of the meeting to global mandates whilst simultaneously assisting members to formulate national policy response strategies and frameworks, the core sectoral issues (sub-themes) that have emerged as central to the 20CCEM theme include:

i. **Education for Sustainable Development:** Education as a key enabler for sustainable development; skills development and transitioning youth to decent work.

ii. **Building resilience through education:** Climate change and the curriculum; displacement and migration due to climate change and the challenges faced by small and atoll islands (including the role of education in weaving resilience using traditional knowledge and local culture).

iii. **Education governance & management:** Strengthening of the teaching profession and school management; issues of quality & equity; financing of education; societal barriers (including drug abuse and internet/social media); and advocacy for education strategies across the SDGs.

A Thematic Issues Paper, which will provide a guideline for the discussions, is being prepared by the Secretariat, with help of the host government. This paper will provide a detailed background and analysis of the conference theme and also highlight fundamental issues for the Commonwealth Education Ministers to address at 20CCEM.

2. Scope of work and anticipated outputs

In addition to the Thematic Issues Paper, the Commonwealth Secretariat will issue a *Status update report on SDG4* to be distributed at the conference and the key findings of the report will be presented to the Commonwealth Education Ministers. The report will provide data and analysis on the progress and status of SDG4 in the 52 Commonwealth member countries and identify common challenges confronting the Commonwealth as a whole as well as those associated to specific countries, group of countries or regions.

The information and analysis pulled together in the report will provide a status update on SDG4 and will feed into the global debates of the Conference. The primary objectives of the report are to:

- Present statistics and analysis that map the status of progress made by the Commonwealth countries towards the realisation of SDG4.
- Provide Commonwealth Education Ministers and other stakeholders with data and information to support their policy dialogue and inform actions and interventions that Ministers may want to adopt in order to accelerate and/or sustain progress and achievements on SDG4 and its targets for 2030.
- Offer an effective tool in providing a credible baseline to support policy and planning in member countries.

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7 The Commonwealth Secretariat. 2016. Policy Brief: A sustainable, cost-effective approach to delivering education policy for the SDGs
A similar report was commissioned for the 19CCEM and constituted four main parts. The first section introduced key frameworks and metrics covered in the report. The statistical indicators and themes to which they applied were explained in the second section. The third section presented the indicators by geographic region and status based on the Human Development Index (HDI) devised by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In the final section of the report, individual country “report cards” on a set of indicators were provided. In its evaluation of progress on the Education for All (EFA) goals since 2000, the report outlined various accomplishments - for instance in primary school enrolments, access to schooling by girls, and early childhood education and care - and identified gaps in each domain.

The Status update report on SDG4 for the 20CCEM will take on a similar format. It will begin with an executive summary giving a synopsis of the report and highlighting the main findings. The body of the report will include brief Commonwealth overviews providing a regional perspective where appropriate as well as individual country “report cards”, presented in a standard format. Each report card will show trends and progress against an agreed set of indicators and will include a brief accompanying analysis.

The report will identify the status of progress against SDG4 targets based on a set of indicators that cover the following six areas: Early childhood care and education, Primary education, Secondary education, Technical and vocational skills, Tertiary education, and Adult education & learning. A list of these proposed indicators is provided in the box below. The final choice will be determined by data coverage, quality assurance and agreement with the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Particular attention will be given to assessing progress and prospects within wider global efforts and initiatives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 4 by 2030. The report will also take account of the persistent challenges and emerging issues particular to Commonwealth countries (detailed mentioned above) and, where data and information are available, illustrate the magnitude of the problem and suggest strategies and initiatives that can be implemented to address the challenges.

### Proposed SDG Indicators

#### Education related SDG Indicators by gender:
- Percentage of children (36-59 months) receiving at least one year of a quality pre-primary education programme
- Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex
- Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex
- Primary completion rates for girls and boys
- Secondary completion rates for girls and boys
- Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex
- Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex

#### Lifelong learning related:
- Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill

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9 The 19CCEM status report, titled ‘Education in the Commonwealth: Quality Education for Equitable Development’, is available at: [link](https://www.dropbox.com/s/j1pxxruOh3524a4/Education%20in%20the%20Commonwealth.pdf?dl=0); and the 18CCEM status report is available at: [link](http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED538725.pdf)


• Tertiary enrollment rates for women and men

Teacher training:
• Proportion of teachers in: (a) pre-primary; (b) primary; (c) lower secondary; and (d) upper secondary education who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training (e.g., pedagogical training) pre-service or in-service required for teaching at the relevant level in a given country

Facilities:
• Proportion of schools with access to: (a) electricity; (b) the Internet for pedagogical purposes; (c) computers for pedagogical purposes; (d) adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities; (e) basic drinking water; (f) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and (g) basic handwashing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions)
• Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study

Other Education Indicators:
• Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data becomes available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated
• Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in: (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment
• Proportion of total government spending on education (indicators of budgetary allocations and expenditures on education and sub-sectors within the education system)

3. Draft timetable

The table below outlines tasks and associated deadlines expected to be carried out, as indicated in the core Terms of Reference defined above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submission of final work plan and associated timelines</td>
<td>Final work plan and associated timelines to be approved by the Commonwealth Secretariat.</td>
<td>End-September 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agreement on final structure of report</td>
<td>Final structure of the report to be approved by the Commonwealth Secretariat.</td>
<td>End-September 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data gathering</td>
<td>Development of a database drawing primarily on international sources (UNESCO UIS, GMER, UNDP, World Bank, UNICEF, relevant country departments- e.g. ministries of education, labour departments etc.). This will provide the core data for the development of country &quot;report cards&quot;. Where possible, data will be collected to show trends over time.</td>
<td>Mid-October 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agreement on final set of indicators</td>
<td>The final set of indicators appearing in the report will depend on the data available and will be subject to the Commonwealth Secretariat’s approval.</td>
<td>Mid-October 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Deadline</td>
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<td>Draft &quot;report card&quot; format and design</td>
<td>Development, with the assistance of a graphic designer, of a &quot;report card&quot; format and design to be applied to each country and then regionally and for the Commonwealth as a whole. As the Commonwealth embraces a very heterogeneous group of countries, different formats may be required for different countries (e.g. high income countries and low income countries).</td>
<td>End October 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agreement on final &quot;report card&quot; format and design</td>
<td>The format and design will need Commonwealth Secretariat’s approval. Graphic files used for creating diagrams will be transferred to the Commonwealth Secretariat along with the final report.</td>
<td>End October 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission of first draft</td>
<td>First draft to be submitted to the Commonwealth Secretariat for feedback.</td>
<td>Mid November 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of final draft</td>
<td>Incorporation of comments and changes suggested by the Commonwealth Secretariat and production of the final report.</td>
<td>End November 2017</td>
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4. **Proposal submission**

A proposal in line with the Terms of Reference detailed above should be submitted to the email address provided and must contain the following:

- Maximum 2-page cover letter outlining relevant experience; expertise; competence and qualifications of consultant(s) to undertake the work;
- A proposed work plan, with clear milestones and timelines of how the work will be executed
- An all-inclusive budget
- Up to date CV for consultant(s)

5. **Working arrangements**

The consultant selected to prepare the Status update report will be required to work closely with the Commonwealth Secretariat Education team.

As a part of the assignment, the consultant may require the services of a graphic designer to help translate the work of the report into a format that is accessible, attractive and accurate. The consultant will supervise the designer on the preparation of the statistical data and text into the correct format and design appropriate for print and online distribution. The report and accompanying graphic files must also be provided to the Commonwealth Secretariat in an editable format.

The consultant will keep the Secretariat informed on the development of the work, consequently guaranteeing the accomplishment of the work within the agreed upon deadlines.

6. **Duration**

Up to 60 working days over a three-month period.

7. **Payment**

A total inclusive fee (for the consultancy and graphic design) of up to £22,000 over the 60-day work period will be paid on the following basis:
• Payment of £5500 upon signing of the agreement
• Payment of £5500 on receipt of a satisfactory draft report card format and design at the scheduled time
• Payment of £5500 on receipt of a satisfactory draft report at the scheduled time
• Balance payment of £5500 on satisfactory completion of the consultancy

It should be noted that payment to a graphic designer (to be contracted by the consultant) will be drawn from the consultancy fee (i.e. the above fee is all inclusive).

8. **Qualifications and experience required**

• Preferably a PhD in Education, Economics, Social Sciences or a related discipline, with 10 years’ experience of assignments for leading international development organisations such as UN or bi-lateral donor agencies;
• Full familiarity and engagement with the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development and particularly SDG4;
• Past involvement with the MDGs covering monitoring, evaluation or assessments;
• Experience of working with major stakeholders at national and international levels in the field of education;
• Familiarity with issues and challenges faced by Commonwealth countries;
• Respect for diversity and intercultural understanding;
• Excellent research and accurate written communication skills in the English language;
• Highly developed IT skills; and
• Ability to produce high-quality work to tight deadlines with minimal supervision.