



# **Commonwealth Secretariat**

## **Briefing Note – Education**

### **The challenge**

Commonwealth ministers of education have reaffirmed their commitment to the six action areas agreed to at the 15th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (15CCEM) in 2003. These are related to the commitment of the Commonwealth Secretariat in ensuring that member countries move towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on education, and the action areas cover:

- The achievement of Universal Primary Education and the elimination of gender disparities in education.
- The use of distance learning to overcome barriers and improve the quality of education.
- Supporting education in difficult circumstances and mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS on education.
- Addressing social and cultural issues that prevent children from attending school.
- The planning and management of the teaching profession on issues such as training, deployment and remuneration.
- The level of prioritisation given to education.

### **The Commonwealth strategy**

The Secretariat seeks to ensure progress in achieving global goals in member countries by playing a catalyst, brokering and advocacy role. We also have direct interventions in some countries in issues such as gender in schools and training teachers in multi-grade teaching methods.

We collaborate with a range of stakeholders in education within the Commonwealth, including the private sector, civil society and NGOs. We promote sharing of good practice through workshops, technical assistance and publications. We develop appropriate tools, mechanisms and publications, and facilitate their adoption by providing technical assistance.

### **Key principles**

- To ensure our programmes' experiences and strategies for achieving inclusive social development and promotion of social cohesion contribute to human development.
- To work in partnership with governments, international organisations, civil

society and regional bodies towards achievement of MDGs related to education.

- To aim to ensure that Education Plans of member states effectively meet the development needs of women, men, boys and girls.

### **The practical response**

The Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol offers an international standard for teacher recruitment, balancing teachers' right to migrate with protection of the integrity of national education systems.

A comprehensive package has been developed to improve multi-grade teaching and learning processes. Regional and national workshops organised to facilitate adoption of the package were held in Lesotho, St Lucia and Samoa in 2007–08.

Specific country-based training programmes and support were provided in Namibia, South Africa, Samoa, Guyana, Botswana and Belize.

We are implementing gender classroom action projects and policy change in ministries of education to ensure schools are gender responsive.

A workshop was held in Uganda on development and implementation of credible education sector plans in the framework of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA/FTI) which was set up to provide external finance in low-income countries. Participating countries included The Gambia, Guyana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Pakistan, Tanzania and Uganda.

Regional workshops for Africa and South Asia have brought together nomadic groups, governments, researchers and education practitioners working with nomadic/migrant populations to share experiences in using flexible education to reach the children in these communities.

Materials illustrating good practices in providing education for children with disabilities have been prepared and distributed to all Commonwealth countries in an effort to ensure implementation of Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### **Ministerial meetings or other highlights**

Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia was the venue for 17CCEM in June 2009, when we celebrated 50 years of 'Education in the Commonwealth': the first meeting of Commonwealth education ministers was held in Oxford, UK, in 1959.

### **Other Commonwealth players and their work**

We work in partnership with the Commonwealth Consortium for Education; the Council for Education in the Commonwealth; and the Commonwealth Foundation.

### **Relations with other bodies involved in the sector**

The Secretariat also works with national governments, NGOs, UN agencies, the World Bank and Global Education Network. We partner with UNESCO, the International Working Group on Education, FAWE (Forum for African Women Educationalists), the International Labour Organization, the Organization of American States, the African Union, and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA).