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Position Paper for Ministers

**Financing Secondary Education in
Commonwealth Countries:
New Challenges for Policy and Practice**

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This paper explores the challenges that face developing Commonwealth countries seeking to build on success in improving participation in primary schooling in the context of Education for All (UNESCO 2000), and the education related Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2000)¹. It has six parts. The first provides a rationale for improved secondary access in low enrolment countries. The second identifies typical enrolment and participation patterns in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The third details the enrolment challenges countries face. The fourth estimates financial demands for expanded access in SSA. Fifth, some policy implications are identified. Finally concluding remarks draw together key issues. Though the analyses summarised are based on SSA data, the arguments and conclusions apply more broadly to low enrolment countries in other regions of the Commonwealth

Rationales for Expanded Access

The need to find sustainable methods of supporting expanded access to secondary schooling is widely recognised, especially in Sub Saharan Africa (Ndoye 2003). Though universalising primary schooling must remain a priority where it is far from being achieved², in much of the low income Commonwealth Minsters are increasingly pre-occupied by the challenges posed by needs to expand access to secondary schooling. The main reasons for this are outlined below and lead to needs to develop new approaches to finance enhanced access to secondary schooling. The case made for expanded access in this paper is that:

- First, the number of primary students is set to double or more over the next 10 years in low enrolment countries as universal primary education and completion is approached. Demand for secondary places will therefore increase dramatically. If this demand is not met increasing numbers of children will be excluded from

¹ This paper draws on analysis undertaken for the Secondary Education in Africa (SEIA) programme of the World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org/afr/seia/>) and from background policy papers commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Further information is to be found on the SEIA website (<http://www.worldbank.org/afr/seia/>) and in the forthcoming report Lewin K M Seeking Secondary Schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa: Strategies for Sustainable Financing; SEIA, World Bank, Washington DC. The Consortium for Research Educational Access Transitions and Equity (CREATE – <http://www.create-rpc.org>) is also developing a programme of research to explore transition issues to high secondary enrolment. DFID will also publish shortly a commissioned study on Expanded Access to Secondary Schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa: Key Planning and Finance Issues

² See the Council for Education in the Commonwealth (2006) study on Attaining and Maintaining Universal Primary Education in Commonwealth Africa – Learning From Experience financed by the Commonwealth Secretariat and CREATE.

realising their developmental potential, exclusion may create social and political tensions, and greater equity will prove elusive (Lewin and Caillods, 2001).

- UPE depends on an adequate flow of qualified secondary graduates into primary teaching (Lewin and Stuart, 2003). This will be hard to ensure where secondary enrolment rates are low. UPE also depends on sustained demand for primary schooling which will falter if transition rates into secondary fall. The MDGs commit countries to achieve gender equity in primary and secondary schooling. The evidence from SSA is clear that this is most likely where secondary Gross Enrolment Rates (GER2) exceed 50%, and is rarely achieved where enrolment rates are lower.
- Third, HIV and AIDs have decimated the active labour force and undermined prospects for economic growth in some developing countries, and pose a threat in many. The evidence suggests that those with secondary schooling are less at risk than those with lower levels of educational achievement, both because they are in school and because they are likely to be more receptive to health education messages (Gregson et al 2000, World Bank 2005, UNESCO 2005). In some countries conflict has seriously degraded capabilities. In both cases the human capital that has been lost has to be replenished if prospects for recovery are to bear fruit.
- Fourth, poverty reduction will stall unless both growth and distribution are considered. Access to and successful completion of secondary schooling is becoming the major mechanism for allocating life chances in most developing countries (e.g. Adea-Mensah, 2000). Secondary schooling excludes those below the 20th percentile of household income in low enrolment countries. This exclusion must be reversed if national pools of talent are to be fully accessed, equality of educational opportunities is to improve, and social mobility out of poverty is to be available to larger proportions of the population.
- Fifth, competitiveness, especially 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. These are most efficiently acquired through secondary schooling. Greater economic growth is associated with balanced patterns of public educational investment. Those countries which have grown fastest have more balanced patterns of investment across different levels of education than those with heavily skewed distributions (World Bank, 1993, 2005, Wood and Mayer, 1999).
- Sixth, curriculum reform at secondary level is essential both because it has been widely neglected and because expanded access will enrol children with different learning needs and capabilities. Increased participation without more relevant, effective and efficient learning and teaching will not be fit for purpose and may create more problems than it solves.

Increased secondary participation within current cost structures in SSA is severely constrained. The basic arithmetic of the dilemma is straightforward. Typical budgeting patterns in low enrolment countries in SSA allocate relatively small amounts of public expenditure on education to secondary level, sometimes less than 10%. In these countries, where the average Gross Enrolment Rate at Secondary (GER2) can be less than 15%, increases in secondary level participation to say GER2 60% without reforms would require a quadrupling or more of allocations to secondary. This is unlikely.

Public expenditure per pupil at lower secondary level across Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries averages about three times that at primary, and about six times that at upper secondary, and in South Asia two to four times. The ratios may be several times greater for specialised technical and vocational institutions. Cost per pupil at secondary in SSA average at least 30% and 60% of GNP per capita for lower and upper secondary. In the SSA countries with the lowest enrolment rates, the cost of a secondary school place may be as much as 100% of GNP per capita and more than 10 times as much as a place at primary school. Though South Asian rates are generally lower as a result of relatively lower teacher's salaries, they may approach these levels in the low enrolments countries.

These costs mean that substantial increases in access will be difficult to finance in a sustainable way without reforms. Relative costs per pupil will have to fall to levels closer to those found in high enrolment Commonwealth countries where secondary places are usually less than twice the cost of primary places. Costs per pupil at lower and upper secondary will need to move towards 20% and 40% of GNP per capita. Investment in secondary schooling as a proportion of national education budgets will have to increase if the development gains associated with expansion are to be achieved.

Setting the Scene

There are about 45 million children of primary school age who are not enrolled in low income Commonwealth countries (LICCS). By far the greatest numbers out of primary school are in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (Table 1). India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Tanzania account for about 80% of children unenrolled in the world. Over 70% of the unschooled in Africa are found in Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana, and Mozambique.

Many more school age children are excluded from secondary schools. At least 140 million are out of school, of whom over 107 million are in South Asia and nearly 32 million in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Where UPE is now within reach, priorities are shifting to secondary schooling, not least to meet the needs and aspirations of rapidly growing numbers of primary completers. Secondary schooling is very unequally distributed where enrolment rates are low. Household income is a very strong predictor of participation to the extent that in SSA children from the richest 20% may be 10 times more likely to be enrolled in secondary school than those from the poorest 40% of households.

Table 1. Children Out of School in the Low Income Commonwealth Countries

	Primary Enrolled	Primary Out of School	Secondary Enrolled	Secondary Out of School
Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)	61332	13219	17385	31758
South Asia	148082	31132	95068	107136
South East Asia	3069	154	2505	985
Caribbean +Central America	786	34	529	97
Pacific	861	196	303	601
Overall	233116	44832	131097	140577

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2005

There are some successes. In most LICCS there have been large improvements in girls enrolments to the extent that the Commonwealth average female enrolment is 48% of the total at primary and 49% at secondary. However gender disparities at primary remain high in parts of India and Pakistan, and in Mozambique and Nigeria where less than 45% are female. At secondary level only nine countries have fewer than 45% girls. Gender disparities at secondary are closely associated with low overall enrolment rates. Thus nearly 90% of countries with secondary Gross Enrolment Rates (GER) below 50% have more boys than girls enrolled; all countries with secondary GERs above 50% have at least 48% enrolment female. Gender parity is also associated strongly with overage enrolment – if girls schooling is delayed by late entry or repetition they are more likely to drop out than boys.

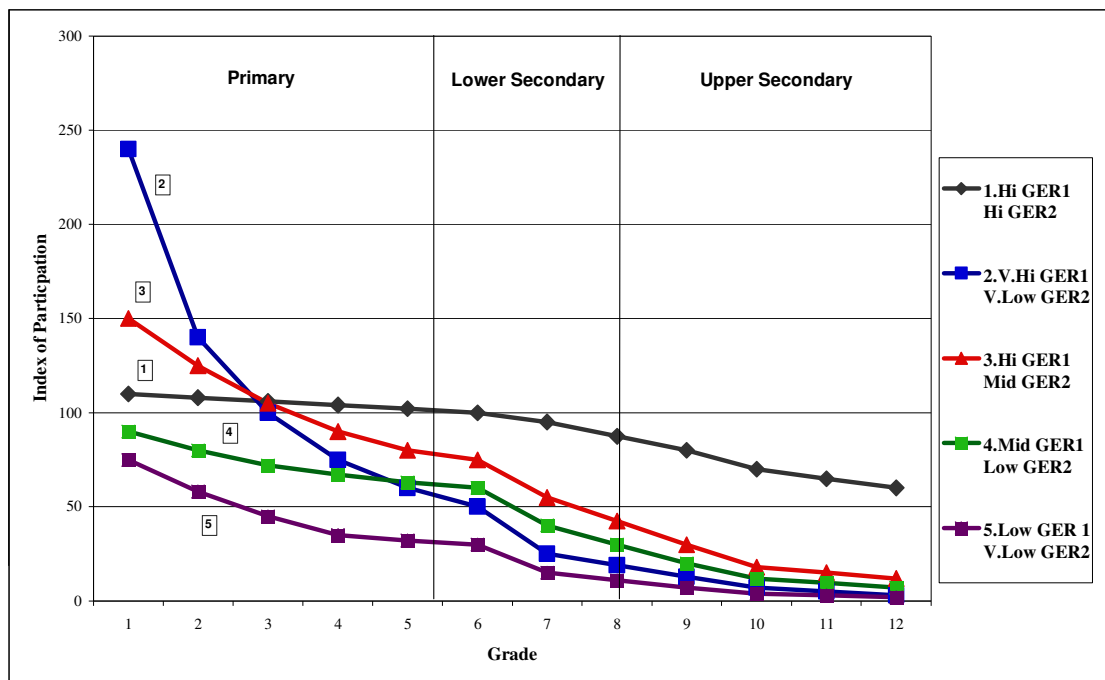
The problems of expanding secondary access can be illustrated with an analysis across 44 Sub-Saharan Africa countries (Lewin, 2006a). This indicates that there are five broad patterns in terms of access³. These are:

- high participation in primary and secondary with low rates of repetition and drop out (1);
- very high initial enrolment rates in primary but high drop out and repetition with low completion rates, with falling transition rates into secondary and low participation(2);
- high primary entry rates and mid levels of repetition, drop out and completion with mid level secondary enrolments(3);
- primary entry rates below universal levels, and low primary and secondary enrolment rates(4);
- very low primary entry rates and very low participation though primary and secondary school (5).

³ The analysis is being extended to South Asian countries and preliminary data suggest similar patterns exist.

A consolidation of these patterns is illustrated in Figure 1 showing how participation falls by grade for each group of countries. These patterns are very different and create different starting points for investment in expanded access to secondary. Where the participation index (the number enrolled/the number in the age group for the grade) is over 100% then most are already enrolled. This is only true for countries of Type 1 for lower secondary grades (grade 7-9). In type 2 countries initial entry is much greater than the number of children of grade 1 age. However participation rapidly falls off such that by grade 6 enrolments are only about 20% of the age group. Type 3 countries have fewer overage pupils in grade 1 and manage to retain more of them through to grade 9 than is the case for type 2. Type 4 and 5 systems fail to enrol many children in grade 1, and have low and very low participation rates at grade 9. Countries with patterns 4 and 5 may come to resemble pattern 2 if UPE programmes are introduced rapidly. However, ideally future expansion will not create the exaggerated patterns of Type 2 whereby massive over enrolment in grade 1 is accompanied by high drop out and little improvement in secondary participation rates. If it does, then the difficulties associated with falling transition rates into secondary will be exacerbated.

Figure 1 Generic Chart of Enrolment Patterns



The patterns suggest different policy priorities for countries in different groups⁴. In brief decisions are needed which

- balance progress on universalising access and completion in primary with needs to increase lower secondary participation;

⁴ See Lewin K M 2006 for more details.

- recognise the interactions between primary and secondary expansion (especially in teacher supply and transition rates);
- link upper secondary enrolment growth to labour market needs and those of post school education and training,
- identify sustainable frameworks to provide financial resources.

The Increased Enrolments Needed

If GER 110% is to be achieved (a level sufficient to support universal enrolment and completion) then on average across SSA the number of primary places needs to expand by at least 1.3 times those available in 2001. If population continues to grow at current rates the number needed will be 1.8 times greater by 2015. If lower secondary was to enrol 100% of those of official entry age 4 times as many places will be needed rising to 5.6 times as many by 2015. At upper secondary the figures are 10.9 and 15.5 times respectively for 100% participation.

To achieve universal lower secondary education one third of the countries in SSA would have to provide between 4 and 10 times as many places as they do currently for the 2001 cohort and 8 to 20 times as many by 2015. The rates of increase needed to universalise upper secondary are even higher.

The detailed analysis suggests that:

- The total number of primary places needs to be increased by more than 30% by 2015 in about 70% of the countries in the data set, and some will have to increase places by as much as 100%.
- There are only eleven countries in SSA that are likely to universalise lower secondary if the maximum sustainable rate of increase in lower secondary enrolments is 10% a year (Seychelles, South Africa, Cape Verde, Botswana, Sao Tome and Principe, Namibia, Mauritius, Togo, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, and Lesotho); if the maximum rate is set at 5% then only five will achieve this goal (Seychelles, South Africa, Cape Verde, Botswana, Mauritius).
- Targets less than GER2L 100% have to be set if they are to be achievable, and these will differ between countries depending on country prioritisation of increased access at primary and secondary levels, the resources available, and the costs of expansion.
- It will be difficult for most countries to hold primary secondary transition rates constant if all primary entrants complete the last year of primary school. Half the countries in the data set will not be able to achieve this unless lower secondary enrolments grow at an average of 10% per year to 2015.
- GER2L can continue to rise if growth is planned to ensure this outcome, even if transition rates fall for a period.

Financial Demands.

Estimates by country illustrate what percentage of GNP would need to be allocated to different levels⁵ to reach the target enrolment rates⁶. The recurrent financial resources needed to support expanded access of GER1 = 110%, GER2L = 60% and GER2U = 30% on average require 2.3%, 1.5% and 1.2% of GNP per capita to support primary, lower and upper secondary schooling across low income SSA. This is equivalent to about \$3.7, \$2.4, and \$2.0 billion per year rising to \$5.0, \$3.2 and \$2.7 billion by 2015. Total expenditure on education would need to be about 6.3% of GNP. This is equivalent to about \$10.2 billion rising to \$13.5 billion per year by 2015. This is about \$3.8 billion less than is currently allocated.

Targeting higher enrolment rates of GER1=110%, GER2L=100% and GER2U=50% results on average in 2.3%, 2.6% and 2.0% of GNP per capita being needed to support primary, lower and upper secondary schooling. This is equivalent to about \$3.7, \$4.1 and \$3.3 billion per year in 2001 rising to \$4.9, \$5.4 billion and \$4.5 billion by 2015. Total expenditure on education would need to be about 8.6% of GNP on average. This is equivalent to about \$13.9 billion rising to \$18.5 billion per year by 2015. This is about \$7.5 billion (at 2002 prices) more than is available from current patterns of expenditure.

If recurrent costs per pupil could be reduced to 12%, 20% and 40% of GNP per capita through packages of reforms the amounts needed for education would fall to about 5% of GNP and the recurrent shortfall to about \$1.5 billion per year. If the higher enrolment targets are used, 6.3% of GNP would be needed with a recurrent shortfall of about \$3.8 billion a year. These lower cost levels imply dramatic reductions in expenditure per pupil at secondary over current levels, especially in low enrolment countries. Efficiency gains of this magnitude would take several years to achieve and may be beyond reach in the short term. Table 1 summarises the results.

These costs are for recurrent expenditure only. Development costs for classroom building at \$10,000 per classroom would be about \$39.2 billion, of which \$18.9 billion would be for secondary expansion. These costs are projected over the period 2002-2015 and thus would amount to nearly \$3 billion a year, or more if incurred over a shorter period. If higher enrolment rate targets are chosen then \$20.4, \$20.3 and \$17.8 billion would be needed for primary, lower and upper secondary respectively totalling \$58.5 billion by 2015, or at least \$4 billion per year using \$10,000 per classroom. If provision of learning materials is regarded as development expenditure then these additional costs could be substantial. The cost would be at least at least \$1.7 billion at primary and \$1.1 billion at secondary. The amounts needed could easily be doubled with higher enrolments. Thus other development costs are of the order of \$3 billion per year.

⁵ Using current cycle lengths for primary, lower and upper secondary.

⁶ These new estimates are published in full and by country in Lewin (2006a). Mingat (2004) has also estimated costs for a smaller set of countries.

Table 1 Costs of Achieving Different Enrolment Targets in SSA

GER1=110,GER2L=60,GER2U=30

Cost Per Pupil - Primary=12%GNP/Cap; L Sec = 30% GNP/cap; U Sec=60% GNP/Cap, HE+ 20%

	%GNP Needed 2002	Amount Needed US\$ 2002 000	Amount needed US\$ 2015 000	% GNP Available 2002	Amount Available US\$ 2002 000	Annual Shortfall US\$ 2002 000
Primary	2.3%	3,746,766	4,953,269			
Lower Secondary	1.5%	2,432,571	3,221,321			
Upper Secondary	1.2%	2,007,447	2,670,555			
Other incl HE	1.3%	2,046,696	2,711,286			
Total	6.3%	10,233,479	13,556,431	3.9%	6,390,486	3,842,993

GER1=110,GER2L=100,GER2U=50

Cost Per Pupil - Primary=12%GNP/Cap; L Sec = 30% GNP/cap; U Sec=60% GNP/Cap, HE+ 20%

	%GNP Needed 2002	Amount Needed US\$ 2002 000	Amount needed US\$ 2015 000	% GNP Available 2002	Amount Available US\$ 2002 000	Annual Shortfall US\$ 2002 000
Primary	2.3%	3,746,766	4,953,269			
Lower Secondary	2.6%	4,054,284	5,368,868			
Upper Secondary	2.0%	3,345,745	4,450,925			
Other incl HE	1.7%	2,786,699	3,693,265			
Total	8.6%	13,933,494	18,466,327	3.9%	6,390,486	7,543,008

Baseline Enrolment Targets, Cost Saving Reforms

GER1=110,GER2L=60,GER2U=30

Cost Per Pupil - Primary=12%GNP/Cap; L Sec = 20% GNP/cap; U Sec=40% GNP/Cap, HE+ = 15%

	%GNP Needed 2002	Amount Needed US\$ 2002 000	Amount needed US\$ 2015 000	% GNP Available 2002	Amount Available US\$ 2002 000	Annual Shortfall US\$ 2002 000
Primary	2.3%	3,746,766	4,953,269			
Lower Secondary	1.0%	1,621,714	2,147,547			
Upper Secondary	0.8%	1,338,298	1,780,370			
Other incl HE	0.7%	1,183,746	1,567,529			
Total	4.8%	7,890,524	10,448,715	3.9%	6,390,486	1,500,037

Higher Enrolment Targets, Cost Saving Reforms

GER1=110,GER2L=100,GER2U=50

Cost Per Pupil - Primary=12%GNP/Cap; L Sec = 20% GNP/cap; U Sec=40% GNP/Cap, HE+ = 15%

	%GNP Needed 2002	Amount Needed US\$ 2002 000	Amount needed US\$ 2015 000	% GNP Available 2002	Amount Available US\$ 2002 000	Annual Shortfall US\$ 2002 000
Primary	2.3%	3,746,766	4,953,269			
Lower Secondary	1.7%	2,702,856	3,579,245			
Upper Secondary	1.3%	2,230,497	2,967,283			
Other incl HE	0.9%	1,532,041	2,029,714			
Total	6.3%	10,212,160	13,529,512	3.9%	6,390,486	3,821,673

Policy Options for Reform.

There are a wide range of options that could result in more participation at affordable costs⁷.

In brief twelve key policy challenges and associated options can be identified which apply to a greater or lesser extent to all low secondary enrolment countries in SSA and South Asia.

First, the allocation of national resources to education has to be considered. The analysis indicates that in general expanded secondary enrolment is unlikely to be sustainable unless more than 5% of GNP is allocated to education as a whole, and at least 2.5% of GNP is available for lower and upper secondary schooling. In countries with longer secondary cycles and higher ratios of secondary costs as a proportion of GNP per capita, substantially more than 3% of GNP would be needed to achieve GER2L 60% and GER2U 30%, excluding the costs of primary and higher education. In most cases allocations to primary education would have to drop below 50% of the education budget – level often cited in conditionalities associated with external support..

Second, the salary and non-salary costs per pupil of secondary provision have to fall in most of SSA if higher levels of participation are to be financially sustainable. Public costs per pupil need to fall below 30% and 60% of GNP per capita for lower and upper secondary. Levels as low as 20% and 40% would bring GER2L 60% and GER2U 30% within reach in most countries without allocating much more than 5% of GNP to education assuming a budgetary distribution designed to achieve this goal. It is important to remember that this does not necessarily imply falling salaries. It does imply much greater levels of productivity similar to those in high enrolment countries.

Third, a balance has to be struck between rates of expansion towards enrolment targets at primary, lower and upper secondary levels. What is appropriate is a policy choice determined in part by current patterns (especially distance from universalising primary), and partly by domestic prioritisation (especially the choice of expanding lower secondary whilst restricting publicly financed growth at upper secondary).

Fourth, structural changes in some countries could facilitate higher secondary enrolment rates at affordable costs (Lewin 2006c). The most important options are reducing elective boarding and/or withdrawing boarding subsidies except where these are essential through progressive transition to more and more day schooling; double shifting where this can reduce constraints on school capacity pending new construction; core curriculum with a limited range of options, and careful scrutiny of the cost benefits associated with high cost specialised secondary level schools when compared to general secondary alternatives (Gill et al 2000, Johanson, 2005)⁸.

⁷ These are discussed in more detail in Lewin K M (2006a).

⁸ Especially where these provide technical and vocational education and market demand signals are weak.

Fifth, better management of the flow of pupils could increase completion rates, lower costs per successful completer, and improve gender equity. This implies strategic intervention to reduce repetition and drop out, lower direct costs to poor households, and review selection and promotion policy related to public examinations.

Sixth, improved teacher deployment is likely to be critical to successful expansion. Much more access could be provided if norms for pupil teacher ratios (e.g. 35:1 at lower secondary, and 25:1 at upper secondary) could be applied; similarly class teacher ratios at secondary level should be less than 2:1. In both cases variations between schools could be reduced to say +/- 10% of the average.

Seventh, an increased supply of trained teachers will be critical to secondary expansion. Where demand is greatest, and existing initial training lengthy and expensive, alternative methods will have to be considered. This will include shortening initial training, making more use of in-service and mixed mode training, and agreeing appropriate levels of qualification for new secondary teachers that may be different from in the past.

Eighth, changes in school management should be considered that provide some incentives to manage human and physical resources efficiently. This can be linked productively with changed methods of school financing that introduce more elements of formula funding, local accountability, and whole school development strategies.

Ninth, secondary expansion without curriculum reform risks irrelevance and wastage. New populations of school children require curricula that address their needs, respond to changing social and economic circumstances, and recognise resource constraints. Well designed core curricula teachable effectively in all schools leading to valued knowledge, skills and competencies are essential.

Tenth, physical capacity needs planned expansion in ways that optimise increase access. This implies effective school mapping, efficient procurement, and medium term planning of construction programmes for new classrooms and schools.

Eleventh, expanded secondary access will benefit greatly from successful mechanisms to generate support from the communities that schools serve. There are many possible methods of cost sharing and cost recovery that can and should be facilitated. These need to be developed. They also need to be linked to the capacity of households to support fees and contributions so that they do not become exclusionary.

Finally, partnerships with non-government providers should be explored to see what contribution they can make to expanded access (Lewin 2006b, Lewin and Sayed, 2005, Lassibille and Tan 2000). The central policy questions are what relationships should be facilitated, how should they be regulated, and to what extent should public subsidy be directed towards which kinds of non-government providers?

Concluding Remarks

The challenges Ministers of Education face in low secondary enrolment countries are considerable. Priority has to continue to be given to improved access and completion through primary school where primary enrolments and achievement levels remain low. This is the most socially efficient way to raise literacy and numeracy levels, and consolidate basic learning skills. It is likely to mean that more than 50% of the education budget needs to be allocated to primary schooling in these countries and that the public cost per child should not fall below about 12% of GDP per capita – the lowest levels found in effective systems. Including the “last 20%” must be approached through fee free primary schools that relieve households of all the direct costs of schooling.

In the majority of low secondary enrolment countries where UPE is in sight, new approaches to investment in expanded secondary education are becoming essential. This offers the prospect of increasing and redistributing opportunities to learn, producing enough secondary graduates to sustain UPE, and improving the knowledge, skill and capability of the labour force. Not only are existing patterns of access to secondary school very regressive (the relatively rich participate and benefit from public subsidy disproportionately), but the gaps between SSA and other regions in participation have been growing. This must have adverse consequences for economic growth and competitiveness.

It has been noted that the costs per student at secondary level relative to GDP per capita must fall. Secondary schooling is very expensive in much of SSA and parts of South Asia costing five or more times as much per student as primary. All high enrolment systems operate at ratios of primary to secondary costs per student of less than 2:1 and rarely exceed about 30% of GDP per capita per student. At higher ratios the arithmetic is inescapable. It leads to the conclusion that mass access to secondary schooling would require most if not all of the education budget, leaving little for other levels. Without serious reform in working practices and teacher deployment mass participation at secondary is, and will remain, unaffordable in many low enrolment countries.

The contribution that non-government and private providers can make to expanded access is valuable but will not provide a substitute for publicly financed mass provision. In most of SSA, families below the 20th percentile of household income cannot afford unsubsidised private schooling. Private providers lack incentives and capacity to reach out to those who are income poor. Not-for-profit providers have to be financed somehow and have their own limitations of reach and capacity. Neither will ever be “providers of last resort” on the scale needed. In the long run only States will make a reality of commitments to EFA which includes expanded secondary access..

Improving gender equity could be accelerated by equalising initial enrolment rates⁹, encouraging progression on-schedule for age¹⁰, and attaining levels of enrolment at

⁹ Most Commonwealth countries succeed in this; those that do not should see this as a priority

secondary above GER2 50%¹¹. These actions alone would greatly reduce differences in enrolment rates between boys and girls. Higher overall secondary enrolment rates are gender equitable and also have a positive impact on HIV/AIDS since clear associations exist between educational level and infection.

Trade-offs in public investment in education are unavoidable¹². Some low secondary enrolment countries spend less on all secondary schools than on higher education. In others as much as 70% of the education budget is spent on primary schools alone. Balanced growth is needed that extends access more equitably, and recognises that subsidies should be progressive, not regressive, and more pro-poor.

There is now great willingness to mobilize resources internationally. The Dakar meeting offered the commitment that no country with credible plans would fail to make progress as a result of lack of financial resources. At Gleneagles the G8 meeting in July 2005 pledged an additional \$50 billion in aid by 2010, with half of this being directed towards SSA. Much of this was intended for educational investment. Eighteen of the poorest countries have now had their debt cancelled which frees up additional resources. The Fast Track Initiative (FTI) promises purposeful action and additional support. The climate is changing to recognised that EFA requires more than universal primary schooling, as was always clear from close reading of the commitments.

It is therefore essential to develop the credible plans longer term plans that mobilise the external finance that is available. This can have pitfalls – several SSA governments are now more than 50% externally financed, and further support will increase this dependence. But without such support, even with serious educational reform, universal access through to the end of a basic education cycle (e.g. grade 9) will not happen in most low enrolment countries, and more than half of Africa's children, and large numbers in South Asia, will not experience anything beyond primary schooling. There were never good reasons why so many children were denied access to literacy and numeracy, and to the higher levels of knowledge and skill that are associated with the kind of secondary schooling that can reduce poverty. The problems can be resolved if all the partners in the process play their roles with trust and commitment, and have the courage to keep asking why has it not happened? Otherwise the children of EFA will have every right to hold them to account.

¹⁰ Where enrolments are gender inequitable it is often because girls drop out faster after the age of 14 no matter what grade they are in. If all girls reached the end of lower secondary school by the age of 15 many of the differences in enrolments would disappear.

¹¹ Most countries with GER2 above 50% enrol more boys than girls.

¹² These trade offs come in many forms – higher enrolment rates may necessitate higher PTRs and lower teacher per class ratios, core curricula with fewer options, better teacher deployment, strategic and equitable use of cost recovery, pro-poor subsidies e.g. bursaries, limited subsidy of private schools in favour of extending the reach of the public system, cost sharing in construction, and balanced investment between general secondary and any support for high cost TVET, and between primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.

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