

SECTION B

A COUNTRY BY COUNTRY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

In this, the main part of the report to 17CCEM, 52 country report cards are presented, one for each of the full members of the Commonwealth except Fiji Islands.⁷ The primary purpose of these cards is to provide a snapshot of the progress that each country is – or is not – making towards achieving EFA/MDG education objectives and targets.

Each card draws on data provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in December 2008. Where other sources have been used these are cited on individual country cards.

It is recognised that by mid 2009 when 17CCEM took place many Commonwealth countries had national data sets that are later than those presented in this report. This is unavoidable given the time that is necessary for national data to be gathered and processed and then sent to UNESCO where, as necessary, a further process of dialogue with individual countries takes place to ensure the accuracy of the data before it is released internationally. Nevertheless the length of the time lag is coming down as countries recognise the value of up to date data for effective monitoring and evidence based policy.

Each card provides national data on five aspects of basic education:

- Pre-primary education (reflecting EFA Goal 1)
- Primary education – access and participation (reflecting EFA Goal 2 and MDG Goal 2 – Target 3)
- Adult literacy (reflecting EFA Goal 5)
- Gender parity and equality (reflecting EFA Goal 5 and MDG Goal 3 – Target 1)
- The quality of education as this relates to formal schooling (EFA Goal 6)

It has not proved possible to compile a data base of sufficient authority to help to analyse progress towards the EFA goal (3) on the learning needs of young people and adults.

To the extent that the data allows, statistics are provided for 1999 and 2007. This eight-year time span should enable some meaningful trends to be identified, towards or away from the EFA/MDG goals. It is still the case however that for some countries internationally quality assured data is not available for these two years. In these instances the latest year for which data are available is cited. In some cases no data are available.

In addition, many Commonwealth countries have small populations (29 under 1.5 million people) where quite small variations in either total or school age populations can result in significant percentage changes in key education indicators.

Two additional and important **health warnings** should be noted. First, national averages smooth over the often significant internal variations and disparities in access, participation and quality in basic education in many Commonwealth countries. Disparities in household incomes, the vagaries of geography, inequities in the allocation of resources for education and a range of socio-cultural barriers and differences all help to determine educational opportunities and outcomes for individual schools and their communities. National data is important but it is only part of the story.

⁷ Data on dependent territories and associated territories is available for some indicators in the Education for All Global Monitoring Report published by UNESCO drawing on data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Second, some of the headline indicators used for national and international monitoring have particular weaknesses. Adult literacy figures are suspect in many countries as a result of self-reporting techniques which invariably leads to the under-reporting of levels of literacy. In reporting on the achievement of universal primary completion, the use of net enrolment rates hide a range of interesting and significant data on age grade enrolment, time spent in completing schooling, and the spread of primary aged children across primary and secondary schools. Valuable work on these issues and other access and equity issues is being undertaken by the CREATE research project.⁸

It should also be noted that:

On **early childhood care and education** (ECCE) the provision of formal pre-primary education is just one component of measures that many countries are taking both formally and through a variety of non-formal activities to promote the well-being of young children.

On **primary education** – where the MDG goal emphasises primary school completion – this report uses the Gross Intake Ratio (GIR) into the last grade of primary school as a proxy – if not totally adequate – indicator of completion. It should be noted in addition that the Adjusted Net Enrolment ratio is used to show primary school aged children who are in school whether they are attending the primary or the secondary level of education.

On **adult literacy**, the EFA target is calculated for each country drawing on available data. This does not mean that individual countries have necessarily set such a target in their national education sector strategies.

On **gender**, the data is focused on the achievement of parity – and not on equality.

On the **quality** of schooling the data base is weak. The literacy of young people is one but in itself unsatisfactory measure of quality. The other indicators used on the record cards are proxy supply side indicators of quality.

A glossary of the indicators used in the report cards is provided in the next section of this report.

For some high income countries there is no direct reporting to UIS, rather it is to the OECD.

This reporting does not necessarily include some of the indicators on basic education sent to UIS by other Commonwealth countries.

The report cards are presented regionally in five sections, for Commonwealth Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, Europe and North America, and the Pacific. At the end of each set of country cards (with the exception of Europe and North America), a regional overview of the data is provided.

⁸ The Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity http://www.create-rpc.org/create_gateway/index.shtml