Implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals in higher education and research

Dr John Kirkland, Deputy Secretary General
The Sustainable Development Goals

• What are they?
• Do they matter to universities?
• What can we do about them?
• What type of university partnerships do we need to address them?
What are the Sustainable Development Goals?
What are the Sustainable Development Goals?

- Successors to the Millennium Development Goals
- Announced in September 2015
- 17 defined goals and 169 accompanying targets
- Implementation by 2030 in most cases; some exceptions
Higher education and the SDGs

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

The Association of Commonwealth Universities
Higher education and the SDGs

**Target 4.3:** By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

**Target 4.b:** By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries…for enrolment in higher education…in developed countries and other developing countries
A note of caution…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries receiving &gt; USD 20 million</th>
<th>(USD million)</th>
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Direct development assistance for post-secondary education 2012

(Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015)
## A note of caution...

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</table>

Direct development assistance for post-secondary education 2012

(Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015)
Do the SDGs matter to universities?
The world beyond 2015
Is higher education ready?

www.acu.ac.uk/beyond-2015  @HEbeyond2015  HE beyond 2015
The world beyond 2015

Key points

• Higher education underpins all development targets, from poverty reduction to employability, health to environmental sustainability

• Higher education institutions are well placed to feed research evidence into the design of national development policy and strategy

• Meeting the MDGs and SDGs depends upon skilled graduates
Higher education: what role can the Commonwealth play?

Introduction

Higher education is increasingly recognised as being critical to social and economic prosperity. It is also a policy area where the Commonwealth could significantly increase its impact. This could be achieved without major cost, by working through existing ministries in place, and persuading member governments to make stronger use of these tools and mechanisms.

We make the argument for six reasons:

1. Higher education is important—and until recently been under-valued in international development debates.
2. Higher education is already an international commodity—thus well suited to international initiatives.
3. Initiatives in higher education can create real intellectual leverage in developing countries.
4. Higher education is undergoing rapid change—and the need for policy and decision-making of information is greater than ever.
5. The Commonwealth has longstanding and well-recognized brands in higher education, on which to build.
6. The Commonwealth can draw on a range of existing agencies to pursue higher education initiatives.

This paper does not provide a comprehensive overview of higher education policy. It focuses on four key areas that have been identified as Commonwealth priorities in the present decade:

1. Higher education institutions are well placed to lead research evidence into the design of national development policy and strategy.
2. Meeting the MDGs and SDGs depends on skilled graduates.
3. Inter-country education strategies from primary through to higher education can ensure sustainable paths for students and can lay the groundwork for accommodating growth in enrolments at all education levels.
4. Ensuring investment at primary and secondary levels enables a more coherent strategy to ensure quality and equity at the higher education level.
5. Higher education contributes to development targets, from poverty reduction to employability, health to environmental sustainability.

The Association of Commonwealth Universities

Higher education: what role can the Commonwealth play?

Background paper for discussion at the 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (19CCEM)
The SDGs provide opportunities to:

- Lobby for stronger inclusion in national development programmes
- Highlight the role of universities as enablers of change
- Bring together internal resources and recordkeeping
- Be useful to our governments – helping them to report progress
- Become more engaged in development issues
A three-pronged approach

1. Meeting the targets – embedding the SDGs in our work
2. Building the wider evidence base
3. Developing enduring relationships
Building partnerships

• How can partnerships be sustainable, beyond the confines of a specific project?
• How can partnerships affect the wider institution?
• How can partnerships be targeted effectively?
  Many African universities are now in great demand!
• How can partnerships be equitable – in the short and long term?
• How are partnerships recorded and built upon?
Ten key principles

1. Shared ownership of the partnership
2. Trust and transparency amongst partners
3. Understanding each partner’s cultural environment and working context
4. Clear and agreed division of roles and responsibilities
5. Effective and regular communication between partners
6. Strategic planning and implementation of partnership plan and projects
7. Strong commitment from junior and senior staff and management
8. Supportive and enabling institutional infrastructures
9. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of partnership and projects
10. Sustainability