

## Education—On the Fast Track for Progress

**Cape Town, South Africa** -More than 80 officials from Sub-Saharan Africa, donor countries and international organizations gathered in Cape Town recently to foster African country leadership in achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals.

The focus of the four-day workshop, which was hosted by the government of South Africa, was on strengthening leadership skills and the knowledge base in African countries in order for them to deliver results.

Senior policy makers from Lesotho, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Uganda, and Madagascar shared their experiences on implementing the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA FTI) in their respective countries and took the opportunity to discuss with their development counterparts problems that related directly to translating sound EFA plans into practice. What does it take to have a credible sector plan? What budget processes must be in place to secure domestic resources and ensure implementation? What organizational structures and processes and “soft skills” are required to facilitate donor alignment and harmonization? What lessons emerge from the implementation of key educational interventions, among them policies on language of instruction and on school construction? What are the challenges of change management in Ministries of Education? At the end of the workshop, country teams identified positive implementation experiences that they felt could be shared with others as well as concrete capacity building needs.



World Bank delegate Serge Theunynck gives a presentation on implementation of education programs

### Country Experiences Highlighted



Delegates listen at the EFA conference

For Sierra Leone, the initiative is of particular importance. “We are starting over. Education was brought to its knees by the war,” said Albert Dupigny, from Sierra Leone’s Ministry of Education. “These workshops begin to help us address the issues and open our eyes. We can listen to others and share experiences, and understand better how to access funds for our pressing needs.”

The World Bank’s Human Development Director for the Africa region Yaw Ansu agrees. “A workshop like this creates a network of learning that allows people to share ideas across countries. This allows people to begin to rely on each other, not the Bank or other donors, and we see this

beginning to happen.” Ansu noted progress has been made in enrollment under FTI. “Now we are faced with the challenge of ensuring quality education. Going forward the focus has to be on the quality of learning outcomes. We are now reaching the marginalized, the poor, the remote areas and we need to find specific strategies to achieve results.”

That gap is felt in Burundi too. Edouard Juma from that country’s Ministry of Education says since primary education school fees were cut in 2006, many children are attending school but there are not enough classrooms, books or teachers to go around. “Much of the education infrastructure was

destroyed during the long civil conflict that devastated the country. The workshop provides an opportunity to speak directly with FTI representatives about technical needs to achieve our objectives."

### How to Address the Gaps

Rebekka van Roemburg, current co-chair of the FTI steering committee, says FTI tries to address four gaps: finance, policy, data and capacity. "But it's not just the countries that learn from each other. It's a partnership. As such we also get signals from the countries and we have to respond. We hear from them that donor harmonization is crucial and that it is not working. We have to fix it." Van Roemburg says the workshop provides "one big reality check in a true spirit of partnership."



Yaw Ansu, Rebekka van Roemberg and Albert Dupigny discuss FTI in Sierra Leone

Indeed, World Bank Education Adviser for the Africa Region, Jee-Peng Tan, and her colleagues, Sajitha Bashir and Prema Clarke say they organized the workshop with the objective of achieving a conversation among all the stakeholders. "For the first time, we have delegates not only from the education sector, but also from finance ministries, as well as development partners and Bank task team leaders. This allows for real dialogue on specific and targeted issues", says Bashir. "Also significant were the many opportunities during the workshop for South-South exchanges. India's former Education Secretary spoke from his personal experience of helping his country to assert leadership in education vis-à-vis the country's external partners; and South Africa's national- and provincial- level officials answered many questions on their country's ongoing challenges in addressing inequities in education through decentralization policies and in raising the level of student learning", adds Tan.

### Education Lending Doubled Since 2000

Since 2000, the World Bank has more than doubled its annual new lending for education. Total education lending increased from \$728 million in 2000 to over \$2.5 billion projected for 2006.



Sajitha Bashir and Edouard Juma with Burundi delegates in a break

By hosting the Fast Track Initiative Secretariat, the World Bank is playing a pivotal role in bringing donors, civil society and developing countries together around the same goal. FTI is already helping to improve the effectiveness of aid by strengthening donor collaboration, alignment and harmonization.

### Background on the EFA-FTI

The Education for All-Fast Track Initiative launched in 2002 by some 30 bilateral and multilateral donors is an evolving global partnership built on mutual commitments. Donors agree to provide coordinated and increased financial and technical support in a transparent and predictable manner. Partner countries agree to put primary education at the forefront of their domestic efforts and develop sound national education plans to accelerate achievement of universal primary education. The overall objective is to ensure access to primary school for all of Africa's children and to enhance the quality of education.

### What about the Education MDG?

The Millennium Development Goal of getting all the world's children into school before 2015 is within reach. In the past five years alone, around 23 million children – who previously had no

access to education – have enrolled in primary school. Six Sub-Saharan African countries have increased primary completion by over 10 percent a year since 2000. Yet, there are still 77 million children out of school today, of which 38 million are in Sub-Saharan Africa. The remaining challenge is enormous. In Africa alone, an estimated 1.6 million teachers would need to be hired to reach the goal of universal primary education.

Today, 33 countries from Sub-Saharan Africa are either participating in EFA-FTI or have expressed interest to join the partnership. The program is a good example of how donors can move quickly, though Albert Dupigny of Sierra Leone says it's not fast enough. Nonetheless, he said he was able to learn things at the workshop that provides optimism that his country may be able to accelerate progress. The World Bank's Yaw Ansu says he hopes the workshop was the first of a series that allows people to get together to really understand the issues and how to proceed. "Here we have a community of people, all focused on the same objectives, all motivated by the challenge, that's how we move forward."

Fast Track Initiative

<http://www.fasttrackinitiative.org>

World Bank Education For All

[http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:20374062~menuPK:540090~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:282386\\_00.html](http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:20374062~menuPK:540090~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:282386_00.html)

*Contributed by Mallory Saleson, Senior Communications Officer, South Africa Country Office*