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A Global Education Fund

Toward a True Global Compact on Universal Education

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Executive Summary

THE LINGERING GAP IN REACHING UNIVERSAL EDUCATION

One of the most compelling—yet most unrealized—global development challenges is ensuring that all children can pursue their right to a quality basic education. Seventy-two million young children around the world will not attend primary school this year, and, if we include those adolescents who could be enrolled in secondary school, the number of out-of-school children rises to over 300 million. To some degree, global awareness of both the silent crisis of education in developing nations and the individual and societal benefits of moving toward a quality education for all children has grown over the last decade. In recent years, more policymakers and foundations have gained greater knowledge of the high economic, health, and social returns of educating girls, while foreign policy specialists increasingly recognize a connection between educational opportunities and encouraging young people to resist opting for more destructive or violent futures. A new global effort on education—the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI)—has been started, and increased civil society advocacy for schooling opportunities for girls and boys, as well as those affected by HIV/AIDS, conflict, disability, and child labor, have all raised the profile of education among the broader public.

Yet, despite these gains in awareness, notable progress made through eliminating school fees, and targeted efforts to enroll more children in school in some developing nations, education has not experienced the large increases in resource mobilization or implementation focus that have taken place in support of HIV/AIDS, debt relief, and malaria over the last ten years. While there have been annual increases in donor contributions ranging from US$1–$3 billion a year, the financing gap for providing eight years of quality basic education—including the interventions necessary to reach the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children—is likely at least US$10 billion annually. This financing gap represents a long way to go, but it is a modest sum for the global community to provide when considering the long-term benefits to economic growth, global health, women's empowerment, and peace.

DO WE NEED A NEW GLOBAL EDUCATION FUND?

The ongoing shortfall in attention and in funding to education has raised the question as to whether the world needs a new Global Education Fund. The answer in a nutshell is a resounding *yes*. But it is a *yes* that is contingent on having a clear understanding of the existing global education architecture—the Education Fast Track Initiative—and what needs to be continued and what needs to be changed from this existing process.

Launched in June 2002, after a year of deliberation and significant civil society consultation chiefly with the education staff at the World Bank, the Fast Track Initiative has become the major global process for education. The FTI seeks to build a coordinated global compact on education through which donors work—both among themselves and together with low-income countries—to develop, approve, and finance national education plans that aspire to get each country's children into school

by 2015. In creating the framework for a new global education initiative, we should therefore consider closely: a) what has worked in the current FTI that should be built upon; b) what has failed and why; and c) what needs to be done to ensure that a new global education initiative works better for the children that it is designed to serve.

Understanding the FTI's strengths and shortcomings will then help us to answer the fundamental questions about developing a Global Education Fund: Is the FTI, in its current structure, adequate as *the* global initiative on education? Does the international community need to dismantle it to design a new education initiative from scratch? Or should the global education community seek to build off what is working in the existing Fast Track Initiative while striving to fill its gaps to create a new, stronger global architecture on education? This paper argues for this third option: a new Global Education Fund that builds off what has worked in the Education Fast Track Initiative by recognizing and directly addressing its strengths and shortcomings and seeks to relaunch and elevate the process of achieving quality universal education for the world's poorest children.

A. What Deserves Praise in the Current Global Architecture?

It is important to recognize that the global education community—including developing nations, donor nations, civil society, and multilateral institutions—has made serious strides in the global education architecture through the establishment and growth of the FTI. To build a stronger global education initiative, we must understand which aspects of the FTI—even if incomplete—deserve praise and should be expanded upon.

- **The creation and expansion of first global education process.** One cannot underestimate the global community's achievement in simply creating a global process on education. The FTI was designed to realize the sense of a "global compact" on education whereby low-income nations are tasked with showing their political and financial will to design strong nationally owned education plans. In turn, donors have the responsibility to work together in a harmonized way to help to close these gaps. To truly uphold the compact, these donors must provide long-term funding to ensure that countries can pursue the ambitious goal of giving all children a quality basic education in a sustainable manner.

- **A unified process to ensure country ownership and donor harmonization.** The FTI is a unified and inclusive process through which low-income countries develop a nationally owned education plan. The strategy is then presented to the community of donors gathered around a single decision-making table**.** This coordinated process is a significant step in replacing donor fragmentation with harmonization among stakeholders and has been praised by the OECD DAC and others as a model of putting the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness into practice on the ground.

- **The establishment of a set of common standards.** As part of its effort toward donor harmonization, the FTI has sought to create a common Indicative Framework that is designed to enable developing countries to focus on a uniform set of expectations when devising a national education plan. While some have legitimate disagreements with specific indicators, the development of common benchmarks allows low-income countries to design an education plan that marries national aspirations with clear international principles for education rather than trying to meet several disparate, and often conflicting, standards set forth by individual donors.

– **The promotion of multiple channels of disbursement under a unified process.** Throughout its development, the FTI has progressed toward a model of a single harmonized process. One important advantage of the FTI—which is too often underappreciated even by those who manage it—is that this singular process enables donors to have the option to contribute resources in three different ways: to a pooled fund, to general budget support, or to bilaterally supported sector plans. The single coordinated process assists donors in providing financial support for endorsed national plans through whichever modality suits their individual development assistance preferences.

B. What Is Not Working in Current Global Education Architecture?

Despite these notable advances in the education architecture, there are serious gaps that must be filled for a Global Education Fund to succeed. Some shortcomings are a result of gaps in the actual structure and architecture of the FTI. Other limitations may be caused by the lack of both political commitment and a commitment to forward-looking strategies from either donors or low-income countries. This distinction is critically important to recognize. Policymakers and advocates should not necessarily hold the FTI architecture responsible for gaps that may have more to do with larger issues of political will. Thus, in undertaking a movement toward a new global education effort, we cannot assume that simply changing the policy architecture will impact what may be a larger issue of a country's political commitment; a new global education effort will have to address both of these aspects. Clear areas where strong reform is needed both within and outside of the existing architecture include

– **the exclusion of children affected by conflict and emergencies**. Since FTI's initial focus was on "fast-tracking" high-performing governments able to develop strong national education plans toward the education Millennium Development Goals, hereto the FTI has had no rational process for covering the education of children who live in fragile states or are affected by conflict. When the FTI Partners are presented with a post-conflict or fragile state to consider for endorsement, they are often faced with a lose-lose scenario: if the partners endorse the country, it can rightly appear as if the FTI gold standard has been seriously relaxed; however, if they do not endorse the country, they can be hindering real progress that could be made in the interim for millions of children affected by conflict or fragility. Fortunately, a reform effort led by the FTI Fragile States Task Team has been underway to build an interim-status designation and funding source for educational assistance to these nations into the FTI process. Including this interim status within a single unified process also creates the opportunity to call on greater participation by UNICEF, known for its experience and expertise in delivery education in a spectrum of emergency situations. While this expansion by the FTI is a step in the right direction, it certainly will need to be strengthened and built upon in any future efforts to reach education for all.
– **a lack of substantial, long-term, and predicable funding**. Without greater certainty that donor assistance will be significant and guaranteed for the long term, low-income nations lack the financial confidence to implement crucial reforms. This is critically the case in terms of the need to hire more well-trained teachers to meet rising enrollments. When developing nations are unsure that external funding will last more than a few years, their finance ministers and education ministers fear that funds could be pulled for thousands of newly hired teachers immediately after they have been recruited, hired, and trained. As a consequence of this doubt

over the availability of long-term funding of recurrent costs, poor nations simply choose not to start massive teacher hiring if they are not sure they can finish the expansion. The result is that admirable efforts to increase enrollment can lead to exploding class sizes and the unfortunate perception of a trade-off between access and quality. Ensuring a sufficient level of funding over the long term may be the single most consequential issue to resolve in creating a Global Education Fund that succeeds in increasing enrollment while also striving toward quality education and improved learning outcomes.

- **a lack of clarity on the real global financing gap for education.** The true financing gap for education is not well understood for a few important reasons. First, accounting on the country level is often done for a narrow definition of education—provision of five to six years of education—and not the eight years that most experts believe are essential for students to have the quality basic education necessary to be productive members of society. Second, financing estimates never adequately calculate the fact that even if a nation only seeks completion of primary education, the success of that goal will dramatically expand demand for education beyond those years—and that this increased demand for secondary education requires better trained teachers and more costly math and science facilities than is the case for primary education. Indeed, more studies are also showing the connection between early childhood education and quality primary education performance. Third, financing gap estimates often do not account for the cost of the successful—yet more expensive—interventions needed for the most disadvantaged children, such as those negatively impacted by disability, conflict, child labor, gender discrimination, disease, or remote geography. Fourth, the determination of country-level financing gaps by the local donor group—as opposed to a more independent party—leads to a systemic downward bias on national education financing gaps. Next, there continues to be no clear definition as to what constitutes an incremental increase in funding by donors to help a nation close its financing gap. If *new* bilateral contributions are not included within FTI accounting, then those donor countries have less incentive to coordinate through the FTI process, leading to further fragmentation. Finally, a firm definition of the "financing gap" must be established and well-communicated so that estimates given indicate whether the number represents an external gap, the amount still needed to mobilize, or the total calculated for the country, regardless of domestic contributions and external commitments already made.
- **insufficient capacity, broad ownership, and independence for the FTI Secretariat**. Even though the FTI has endorsed thirty-six low-income countries, oversees the management of four task teams and three committees, and interacts with more than thirty bilateral donors, international agencies, and development banks, its Secretariat only has twelve full-time staff, which stands in stark contrast to the nearly five hundred staff members working at the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (Global Fund for AIDS/TB/Malaria). With the growth of FTI's pooled fund—the Catalytic Fund—has come neither the expansion in staff nor the creation of the more developed approval and accountability processes that are needed for it to quickly disburse larger resources. Furthermore, long-standing confusion about the relationship between the FTI and the World Bank has led to a lack of broad ownership among partner organizations and institutional jealousies that have hindered its growth and acceptance as *the* global education process. What is needed is an independent Secretariat with more human and financial resources to ensure quick responses to countries in need, greater accountability for both donor commitments and recipient use of funds, and more shared ownership of, and therefore responsibility for, the global education process among all the major donor groups and multilateral organizations.

– **a lack of awareness of a global education initiative.** Even after six years, the Fast Track Initiative is not well-known globally outside of education expert circles. Its under-the-radar status is in part due to the fact that neither the name nor its much-used acronym clearly communicates a major global education initiative to most nonexperts. But perhaps more importantly, with the exception of the Netherlands and UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, the push for universal education has not been strongly promoted by a critical mass of heads of state.

C. Toward a Global Education Fund

This paper holds that there are important design elements of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative that reflect a promising model for a coordinated, global effort on education that should be built upon. Yet it also finds that, without serious reforms and a major rebranding and relaunching moment by heads of state that mobilizes a greater global commitment to more resources and sound program implementation, a large gap will remain in the quest toward education for all. A new Global Education Fund must combine the strengths of the current Fast Track Initiative with lessons learned from it and other global development initiatives to make significant steps forward in elevating education on the global agenda. Thus, a Global Education Fund must be based on working toward the following goals:

– **A Single, Unified Global Education Process.** To have a coherent and efficient framework for developing countries seeking to reform and expand education for its children, there should be one single global process for all countries, without exclusion based on economic, political, or social development constraints. A single unified process can incorporate a "Progressive Framework," which that provides the appropriate degree of assistance and public endorsement to countries based on their individual development stage. It includes steps to secure international endorsement and funding at both an interim-status stage for countries that are fragile or postconflict, as well as for those that have been fully endorsed by FTI. A global education process that seeks to achieve education for all must provide as much help as possible to children affected by conflict or living in fragile states, while still preserving a gold-standard designation for the highest performing countries.

– **A Stronger Independent Secretariat with Broad Organizational Ownership.** An expanded global process should be managed by an independent entity that can leverage the strengths of the multiple partners of the global initiative without being dominated by a single organization. Broad organizational ownership means greater roles and responsibilities for the existing core partners—UNICEF and UNESCO—while also bringing additional NGOs, multilaterals, foundations, and the private sector around the table. A more inclusive process that incorporates additional countries will require increased human capacity at the secretariat in order to uphold the principles of full and quick information and assistance, particularly for countries emerging from conflict or affected by fragility and most in need of immediate support.

– **A Stronger Focus on Both Coordinated Bilateral Contributions and a Stronger, Better-Managed, Pooled Fund.** For a true global compact on education, it is essential to maintain (and elevate) the ability of donors to support education bilaterally, through general budget support, and/or through a pooled fund. When done well, maintaining multiple channels of disbursement is not at odds with donor coordination. A new Global Education Fund must clearly include a stronger pooling mechanism (superior to the FTI's existing Catalytic Fund) that

draws lessons from the two major global health funds, including an emphasis on regular replenishment, longer funding cycles, enhanced multilateralism, peer review, and broad ownership for the proposed plan among all stakeholders in the country. Yet, it must also continue to include aspects of the current "virtual fund," which allow donor nations to work in a coordinated manner regardless of whether they choose to contribute bilaterally or through a pooled fund that would be managed by the new secretariat. The goal of the Global Education Fund is to coordinate all channels of disbursement—whether national donor agencies, multilateral organization, foundations, or the private sector—within the national education plan.

- **Increases in the Level and Duration of Funding.** A new global education initiative must employ mechanisms that will establish both a clearer understanding of the true financing needs to achieve universal education and strategies for dramatically and systematically increasing the level and duration of funding. Clarity around the level of external and domestic financing required for each low-income country to reach education for all and an understanding of the "fair share" due from major donor nations will be essential for making the case for dramatic increases in the level, duration, and predictability of funding for education. Regardless of the financing modality, a Global Education Fund must strategically address how to encourage donors to make (and fulfill) long-term commitments to supporting education to help deal with the recurrent costs of expanding access and improving quality of education.
- **Building Mutual Trust for a Global Compact—Including Funding Promises, Accountability, and a Focus on Learning Outcomes.** A true global education initiative can effectively realize the concept of a "global compact" on education by ensuring that donors are held accountable for their promises that no country with a credible strategy would fail to reach its education goals on account of a lack of funding, while low-income countries are held responsible for ensuring the accountability of the deployment of those funds to their intended uses and for ensuring an enhanced focus on quality inputs and learning outcomes. Donor nations must build the trust that they will fulfill their long-term funding promises to give poor nations the confidence to embark on long-term expansions of access and quality. Furthermore, donor nations committing vastly larger funds will need greater accountability from recipients in demonstrating that such funds are properly deployed and are aimed at both increasing universal education and producing learning outcomes.
- **New Name, New Brand, New Launch.** A new name to describe the strengthened global architecture on education is not inconsequential. If Global Education Fund is not acceptable, there should be an alternative name that clearly communicates its mission to the world, such as the Global Compact for Education. However, even with a better name, a newly reformed and rebranded initiative must garner the support of a critical mass of heads of state, particularly those in the G8, in coordination with support from heads of state from low-income countries.

Despite the current global financial crisis, the time could still be right for such progress on education for all. While the global community is faced with an over $10 billion external financing gap, we know that to fill this gap, the aid would be phased in over time to ensure adequate absorptive capacity and that the burden to any single nation would be only a fraction of the $10 billion. In the United States, the Education for All Act, initially sponsored by Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and Representative Nita Lowey (D-NY) and now with bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress, aspires to move the United States closer to meeting its share of the global financing gap by increasing aid to education to $3 billion a year by 2012. President-elect Barack Obama, who has explicitly called for a Global Education Fund, said in September that, if he were president, he would sign the Education for All Act. Among other donor countries, the Netherlands has kept up its historic leadership by making a major

contribution to UNICEF for education in countries affected by conflict and fragility; Prime Minister Gordon Brown has kept education a major focus of UK development assistance; and the European Union is becoming increasingly engaged. Thus, this could easily be a time when the global community makes universal basic education its next big priority for development, poverty reduction, and global opportunity.

The State of Universal Education

At the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, 180 nations agreed to the six Education for All (EFA) goals, including what was to become two of the Millennium Development Goals: universal primary education (UPE) by 2015 and gender parity in primary and secondary school by 2005. The most prominent EFA goal—universal primary education by 2015—is one of the world's most ambitious yet most pathetic goals. It is ambitious because, as we speak, 72 million children around the world will be denied a primary-level education this year, and if one counts adolescents who could be in secondary school, the number of out-of-school children rises to over 300 million. Approximately half of all boys and girls in sub-Saharan African will not complete their primary education. Furthermore, as the Hewlett-Gates Quality Education in Developing Countries initiative and others have emphasized, there are enormous concerns over the quality of education that children who *are* in school are receiving. Opening school doors to all children without simultaneously being able to provide a sufficient number of trained teachers, textbooks, or other learning materials will too often lead to exploding class sizes and declining quality. Finally, there are certain populations whose education statuses are particularly deplorable. For example, between two and ten out of every one hundred children with a serious disability in the developing world are in school; 6 percent of young women refugees attend secondary school; and children affected by conflict, child labor, and debilitating diseases are in need of more intensive interventions to get them on the path to a quality basic education and the real chance at a productive and fulfilling future.

Emphasis on the vast need in education does not mean that there has not been significant progress achieved since 2000. As calculated by the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report, the number of children who are out of school has decreased by about one-third since 2000 (though much of that progress can be attributed to the economic growth of India). We have seen specific attention paid to the challenge of ensuring that girls have access to a quality education supported by the demonstrated impact that educating girls has on improving economic growth, health outcomes, and women's empowerment. The degree of civil society engagement in global North and South countries has increased significantly over the past eight years, often organized under the umbrella of the Global Campaign for Education. And, as to be discussed in this paper, the commitment to organize some form of a global process for financing the promise of universal education has successfully begun through the creation of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative.

Nonetheless, eight years after the world signed onto ensuring quality basic education for all at the World Economic Forum in Dakar, the issue of education in developing countries remains very much a silent crisis. Education has not seen a major expansion of external financing or public attention from G8 and other donor nation heads of state in the way that progress has fortunately been made in addressing HIV/AIDS, debt relief, and malaria. The policy challenge now is determining the best way forward for education. In addressing the issue of whether there should be a new Global Education Fund, this paper argues that a serious effort toward a new global education initiative that builds off

the Education Fast Track Initiative is both essential for reaching our global education goals and ripe for action around the world.

History of a Global Education Fund

At the completion of the World Education Forum in Dakar, one significant question had yet to be answered completely: How would the global compact envisioned there—the idea that a nation with a strong plan to provide education for all its children would not fail on account of a lack of resources—be effectively and efficiently realized? Would the global community create a mechanism that would be capable of financing strong education plans to make these lofty goals a reality?

In two other crucial development sectors—debt relief and HIV/AIDS—the global community had come together to make significant progress toward supporting this type of compact with mutual responsibilities between poor and donor nations. One of the main strengths of both the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) program and Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria was the clear communication to the public that a global effort was needed, that there was a major financing gap to achieve the goal, and that there was a structure for a well-defined global compact to meet the need in question. Both initiatives were also bolstered by open commitments from the heads of the major donor countries and other global leaders. As a result of this public sense of a global compact, both donor and developing countries had an awareness of their mutual obligations and thus were held accountable to their citizens and the world to fulfill their promises.

As a policymaker working on both debt relief and global education in the White House in 2000, what struck me and other people working in the area was the lack of any sense of a global compact on financing for education. Through the work on the HIPC debt-relief program, there was a clear set of obligations for indebted countries and a clear set of obligations for donor countries which, together, created global compact on debt relief. For debt relief, there was a form of *certain but contingent funding*. Heavily indebted poor countries would work toward meeting a set of requirements to reach its "decision point," which would guarantee it a certain level of funding. Meeting additional benchmarks would move the poor country to its "completion point" and ensure total debt relief. This form of certain but contingent funding is an extremely important part of maintaining political will to achieve the goals at hand. Without the certitude of a real commitment by donors to provide debt relief, recipient countries would not have had the confidence to follow through with the intended reforms.

The interim funding and full debt relief that were linked to these two points represented a real compact on debt relief—something that was glaringly absent from education financing. As the Minister of State for Education in the Gambia explained, without financing certainty from donors, it would be a one-sided compact: "You do the hard work of constructing a comprehensive national education plan, bringing together NGOs and other domestic constituents, and allocating your own internal resources to the effort, and we are told by donors that we *may* or *may not* help you, based on whether it coincides with our foreign policy interests and other domestic political considerations. That is not a contract." This absence of certainty was clearly at odds with the Millennium Development Goal push for countries to establish national education plans to get all their children into school by 2015. How could low-income country government officials justify undertaking such an ambitious plan without some assurance that donors would help finance the plan?

In this light, in 2001 I was one of a few people working in the global education community to propose a global education initiative. In the September/October issue of *Foreign Affairs,* I wrote of the need for a global fund for education—what I called in that article a Global Alliance for Basic Education (GABE)—to make true on the Dakar promises and the realization of a global compact on education.[1] The proposed global fund for education would seek to put into practice a singular global compact on education from both the donor and developing nation sides. The GABE called for the mobilization of major new resources disbursed through a single global process using a set of common standards and an independent expert peer review committee from both developed and developing countries. The GABE sought to eliminate the fragmented and overlapping processes that complicated low-income countries receiving international education aid by tracking all aid to education flows, whether contributed through a new pooled fund or as bilateral contributions, to ensure that there are sufficient funds to cover the particular needs of each national plan.

FROM GLOBAL FUND TO VIRTUAL FUND

After having the privilege of leading the U.S. delegation at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 and then writing the *Foreign Affairs* essay, I became part of a small but dedicated civil society group that included Oxfam, Action Aid, and the Global Campaign for Education. Members of this group were asked our views on an ongoing basis by World Bank president Jim Wolfensohn's education team on how best to craft a structure for "accelerated financing" for education, which many of us hoped would be the basis for a global fund on education.

Yet, in the run-up to an important meeting in Amsterdam in 2002—a meeting hosted by the World Bank and the Dutch government that was designed to reach consensus on such a global education initiative—Oliver Buston, then at Oxfam, told me that, while many at Oxfam had hoped to support such a fund, pushing for it in Amsterdam might be counterproductive. He reported that there was a sense of "fund fatigue" and "fund phobia" after the negotiations over the Global Fund for AIDS/TB/Malaria, even among education advocates in civil society and in donor and developing nation governments. Representatives from Oxfam believed that no one had the patience for the amount of time and effort it would take to set up another new structure for supporting education, preferring instead to devote efforts to getting donors to contribute more through bilateral arrangements. It was clear within several hours of the start of the Amsterdam meeting that Buston's prediction about the skepticism to a singular fund was correct. As a result, the civil society representatives, UNESCO, which was represented by Sir John Daniel, and the World Bank, which was represented by Jo Ritzen and Ruth Kagia, united around the creation of a "virtual fund"—which came to be called the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI), due to a long-stated call by civil society to "fast track" several countries toward universal education in order to build confidence in a global process for the international commitment to education for all. Unlike the Global Fund for AIDS/TB/Malaria, the FTI's "virtual fund" did not call for a single pooling mechanism for resources administered by a single administrative bureaucracy. Rather, the goal was that the FTI Partnership would work together to develop a single set of standards, a straightforward endorsement process, and a clear determination of the financing gap in a country. Developing nations with strong education plans would then apply for FTI endorsement and donors would sit around a single table and, using the set of comparable standards, would approve viable plans and agree to support education in a coordinated way to fill a country's financing gap. One attraction of this model was that it theoretically provided a forum to get the best

of global coordination while allowing donors who preferred to give bilaterally for accountability or "flag-planting" reasons to do so in a coordinated and cooperative forum. Within a year, however, even those skeptical of multi-donor trust funds did concede that some form of pooled funding might be necessary for so-called donor orphans—those countries unable to mobilize sufficient bilateral contributions. This realization spurred the creation of the Catalytic Fund, whose mission and reach has since been expanded.

Given this history, the real question—and the more informed debate—about a Global Education Fund is 1) whether the structure of the current multilateral education initiative—the FTI—is adequate as the global initiative on education; or 2) whether we need to dismantle the Education Fast Track Initiative and design a new initiative from scratch; or 3) whether we should use what works in the Fast Track Initiative as a foundation to build from, with significant reforms and a major effort to rebrand and relaunch a singular global process for achieving education for all. This paper takes the third approach. In order to make a rational judgment about how to move further toward a higher profile and more effective global initiative for education, it is crucial to carefully review what has and has not worked in the first six years of FTI.

Four Clear Successes of the Fast Track Initiative

At the UNESCO High Level Group Meeting in Beijing in 2005, I was asked to give the civil society perspective on the Fast Track Initiative, where I said that the FTI can be seen either as a glass half-full or a glass half-empty situation.[2] On the plus side, beyond the significant accomplishment of its speedy creation, the FTI's most successful elements are its focus on country-ownership of the process and coordination among multilateral institutions, donor groups, and developing nations; the creation of a set of common standards for developing country plans; and the utilization of both bilateral support and pooled funding to fill the financing gap toward the realization of the global compact on education. Due to these four clear successes, the Fast Track Initiative has become increasingly better known over time and FTI endorsement is now regarded within the education development world to be the gold standard for investing in education in developing countries.

1. CREATION AND EXPANSION OF FIRST GLOBAL EDUCATION PROCESS

One cannot underestimate the achievement by the global community in being able to create a global process on education—from whole cloth—that already has lasted more than six years**.** Since there is no single international body with the mandate to make decisions in the world of global aid architecture, the notion that the dedicated representatives from NGOs, multilateral organizations, and national governments could create an ongoing multilateral process from scratch is no small accomplishment.

Strengthened by an endorsement from the G8 two months after its launch, FTI has since institutionalized itself, regularly convening its stakeholders and prioritizing the notion that all decisions are made jointly with donor nations and multilateral organizations working together. Annual FTI Partnership meetings convened in conjunction with the UNESCO High-Level Group meeting bring together developing nations and NGOs to set operating policies and procedures, as well as the long-term strategic plan. An FTI steering committee, co-chaired by one G8 donor country representative and one non-G8 representative, has also expanded to include representatives from bilateral donor countries, multilateral organizations, developing countries, and civil society.[3] Furthermore, to meet the evolving needs of developing countries and to strengthen the overall FTI process, several task forces have been set up to address specific issues, including fragile states, country-level capacity, and quality of learning outcomes. As of November 2008, thirty-six nations have FTI-approved national plans for achieving education for all and the FTI hopes to have endorsed the national education plans of approximately fifty countries by 2010.

2. MOVEMENT TOWARD A GLOBAL COMPACT: COUNTRY OWNERSHIP AND DONOR COORDINATION

When working at its best, the coordination among the major multilateral institutions, donor groups on the ground, and developing nations is a model for development assistance. The Fast Track Initiative has been recognized by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) as a working model of the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The FTI's recent pilot survey on the Paris Indicators shows that there has been substantial progress on a majority of the Paris Indicators in most of ten FTI countries surveyed. This assessment noted in particular the coordinated technical cooperation by the local donor groups, the development of credible education sector strategies and performance reviews, the use of program-based (as opposed to project-based) approaches, and joint field missions and the sharing of analytical data and lessons learned among donors.[4] Before the FTI, the criticism of donors was often that they came in with their own agendas and did not coordinate with the national education plan—or even other donors making the same types of contributions (building schools, training teachers) in the very same areas. This discordance had many negative consequences in education. Previously, ministers of education and finance had reported spending a majority of their time cultivating and maintaining donor relations, time not spent on actual national policymaking and on-the-ground programming.

After its first two years, the FTI agreed to shift the approval process to the country level, empowering local in-country donors to coordinate with their host countries by coming around the same table to make mutual decisions about support for national education plans. In several cases, this shift appears to have created model examples of donor coordination, an example of which can be seen in Kenya. As described in interviews with both the minister of education and permanent secretary of education in Kenya, the Ministry of Education brings all donors—and potential donors—to the same table to help develop and sign off on the national education plan. Each donor then establishes which piece of the plan it will support. Thus, while an individual donor agency or NGO may manage its own initiative, it does so as agreed upon within the context of the ministry's national education plan. This system both minimizes program duplication and encourages ownership of the whole plan by the ministry. Instead of a ministry feeling that a strong NGO program is a threat to its own work, it becomes a bragging point for the fulfillment of the national education plan. Likewise, having been included in the discussions around developing the national plan, each donor can now take an active role in its implementation and also have a sense of ownership in the process managed overall by the government of Kenya. A clear plan and management structure means that instead of each single donor pursuing its own goals individually, each is doing its part to fulfill the national plan.[5]

A similar description of the FTI process was given at a Council on Foreign Relations forum in March 2008 by the Rwandan minister of education, Jeanne D'Arc Mujawamariya, who stated, "It is like we take a cake and we divide it and whoever wants to be our partner takes his part. … They enjoy being called partners rather than donors. They follow our lead. They understood that they are not the ones to decide what we want. They come and help us to achieve what we have decided to achieve."[6] Thus, in this movement toward a true global compact on education, both developing and donor countries demonstrate their political and financial commitment to achieving universal education in a coordinated manner when developing countries create nationally owned education plans and donors fulfill their responsibility to work in a harmonized way to implement the endorsed plans and fulfill their external funding needs.

3. CREATION OF A SET OF COMMON STANDARDS

The Fast Track Initiative developed the Indicative Framework, which serves as the set of common standards that enable developing countries to create a single plan without having to juggle conflicting criteria. The Indicative Framework is comprised of technical benchmarks against which each country's national education plan is evaluated, seeking to ensure consistent and equitable treatment across countries. Benchmarks in the framework included levels of domestic resource mobilization, boys' and girls' intake and completion, student-teacher ratios, and number of instructional hours.

While the use of specific indicators in the framework remains at least somewhat controversial—particularly regarding its benchmark on the level of teacher salaries—it does serve as a gathering point to join partners together in discussions guided by these common standards. The lead coordinating agency in a developing country must take responsibility for preparing a report of the assessment, with notification of endorsement, and then submit it to the country's government and development partners, as well as the FTI Secretariat.

4. SUPPORT OF MULTIPLE DISBURSEMENT CHANNELS WITHIN A UNIFIED PROCESS

A critical issue in determining the financing mechanisms for a global aid architecture is how to balance oft-competing preferences for an emphasis on pooled funds versus bilateral contributions. Many policy experts and advocates support centralized funds because they increase donor harmonization by ensuring that poor nations do not have to deal with multiple donors replete with their different conditions, procedures, and political considerations and can more easily carry out country-level disbursements based on merit rather than politics. Yet, many donor nations nonetheless support enhanced bilateral contributions, which allow these individual donor countries to "plant their flags" and work directly with countries of strategic interest in a way that ensures a certain level of control, as well as credit, for the programs implemented.

There are two main global health initiatives that utilize pooled mechanisms—the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI). Since its creation in 2002, the Global Fund for AIDS/TB/Malaria has approved funding of US$11.5 billion, yet this accounts for just one-quarter of all international financing for AIDS globally.[7] Bilateral initiatives, such as the United States' President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief" (PEPFAR), France's "solidarity levy" on airline tickets, and Japan's "health and development" initiative, have contributed a significant amount of funding to HIV/AIDS. In the case of PEPFAR, 95 percent of the $48 billion authorized by the U.S. government will be disbursed through bilateral programs, with only $2.5 billion—5 percent—contributed to the Global Fund for AIDS/TB/Malaria.

One of the underappreciated virtues of the Fast Track Initiative—even by those who administer it—is that it is the rare global development initiative that allows and coordinates both pooled and bilateral contributions. The initial goal of the FTI's "virtual fund" was to create a way for donors to sit around the same table, approve credible national education plans, and then agree to fund the plans through bilateral contributions. From the start, FTI partners recognized that some low-income countries—even after being fully endorsed—did not have major donors who could play a major role in securing adequate external funding. In the spirit of the global compact around which the FTI was established, the pooled Catalytic Fund was created to address the need of these "donor orphans." Al-

though it was originally intended to be a small, short-term source of bridge financing for these types of nations, the breadth and purposes of the Catalytic Fund have since expanded to allow it to serve a broader range of nations as a more general vehicle for closing financing gaps. As of November 2008, seventeen donors have pledged over $1.2 billion in total—not annually—yet overall disbursements have reached only approximately $350 million. While there has been a recent unfortunate tendency to disproportionately emphasize contributions to the Catalytic Fund and downplay bilateral contributions in recent years, the existing FTI does represent an important innovation in the global aid architecture: the potential to have a single coordinated mechanism that allows donors to support the achievement of a strong national education plan either bilaterally or through a pooled fund.

Five Major Gaps in the Fast Track Initiative

Despite its clear successes, there are five major gaps in the current FTI process that need to be remedied: the exclusion of children living in conflict-affected or otherwise fragile states; the absence of long-term predictable funding; a lack of clarity around the financing gap for education; the stagnant capacity levels and lack of independence of the FTI Secretariat; and the overall shortfall in awareness of the existence of a global process.

1. EXCLUSION OF CHILDREN AFFECTED BY CONFLICT AND/OR LIVING IN FRAGILE STATES

One of the most glaring defects in the FTI process is that it is not a fast track at all for children who are in refugee situations, are internally displaced, or are living in fragile nations. As important as it is to have a model in which high-performing countries develop strong national plans, this framework leaves out those children who may be most in need of the world's help to ensure they receive an education. Nations that are engaged in, or just emerging from, conflict or are otherwise fragile are often unable to meet the criteria set forth for designing a gold-standard plan that puts in place a system designed to have all children completing primary education by 2015. Therefore, an inherent tension exists between the global compact with high-performing nations to ensure countries with a strong plan did not fail on account of a lack of funding and the international commitment to all children to fulfill their right to an education.

When conflict-affected and fragile countries are unable to develop a strong nationally owned education plan, they often do not have access to sufficient funding for two primary reasons. First, the provision of education is often overlooked by the humanitarian assistance community that is limited, often by law, to focusing its efforts and resources on more traditional life-saving interventions, such as supplying food, water, shelter, and health care. Second, governments involved in conflict often cannot meet the multiple tests of sufficient political will, technical capacity, and the promise of high performance, leading donors to perceive "trust gaps" that prevent them from committing significant new resources. Reluctant donors fear that funds provided for education to weak-functioning states could be wasted, or, worse, diverted to negative causes—funding conflict, discriminatory activities, or corrupt politicians, all of which could even contribute to the fragility of the state or, in the case of waste and corruption, be highly publicized failures that will decrease support for overall development assistance to poor nations. (A more in-depth discussion of donor-recipient trust gaps can be found in *Closing Trust Gaps: Unlocking Financing for Education in Fragile States.*)

Under the current FTI architecture, the situation of fragile and postconflict states can appear to provide a no-win situation. On one hand, if a process like the FTI simply designates all nations—regardless of level of capacity or political commitment—as FTI endorsed, then the process will lose the sense that endorsement carries with it a gold standard or seal of approval. On the other hand, simply denying such nations entry into the FTI means abandoning the educational interests of the

worst-off children in those nations—or, at best, leaving their educations to fragmented and ad-hoc initiatives that exist outside of the coordinated global process.

It is imperative to reconcile the general understanding that donors will support governments that are truly committed to education and the moral obligation to uphold the right of every child to an education, regardless of where they were born. If the global community truly cares about reaching quality education for all children, it must find a way to assist all countries that show a strong interest in providing quality education for its children while still being assured that these governments are not undermining the progress of development through negative actions. Options and recommendations for how to include these "pre-FTI" countries into a single global process are proposed and analyzed with greater detail in *Covering Children of Conflict: Moving Toward a New Global Architecture for Education.* Without a mechanism to close the "trust gaps" and provide resources to children in those settings, the global community is failing to fulfill the universal right of the child to education by creating a framework that, by its definition, exclude tens of millions of youths. While this tension for realizing the global compact on education within a single global aid architecture is real, it is also solvable. One core goal here in designing expanded global aid architecture is to understand how to strengthen the existing education frameworks in a way that explicitly includes children of conflict.

Fortunately, reforms efforts in this area are already under way. Created in 2005 to explore if and how fragile states should be included within the existing FTI process, the FTI Fragile States Task Team has been working toward creating an interim status that focuses on support for interim plans so that pre–FTI-endorsed countries can be part of the global process. After demonstrating that the FTI was in fact the appropriate mechanism to expand coverage to children of conflict, the Fragile States Task Team was asked in April 2008 to develop a specific proposal for establishing an interim process and a financing mechanism for fragile states. At its September 2008 meeting, the steering committee agreed to expand the current FTI process to include an interim status for countries in conflict, postconflict, or emergency situations and asked the Fragile States Task Team to work with UNICEF, the Dutch government, and additional donors to operationalize the Education Transition Fund as the financing mechanism for FTI interim-status countries. As this paper is completed, this reform is still a work in progress.

2. LACK OF SUBSTANTIAL, LONG-TERM, AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING

While a partial accomplishment of the FTI has been an increase in funding for those countries that are ready for the FTI process, overall funding for universal basic education remains weak and inconsistent with the promises made in Dakar or the Millennium Development Goals. The current approximations of how much more money is needed to achieve universal basic education are certainly underestimates of the real need for external financing. By best current estimates, which are faulty for a number of reasons described in detail below, what we do know is that total funding for basic education has had a net increase of less than $2.5 billion worldwide since 1999—hardly an adequate increase, given the global ambition of getting every child worldwide into school by 2015. Furthermore, while commitments for basic education increased from $2.8 billion to $5.1 billion, aid disbursements only increased from $2.1 billion to $3.5 billion during the same period. In order to meet the external financing gap for quality basic education, this disbursement level will need to increase by as much as an additional $10 billion per year. One example of recent decreases in funding comes from the World

Bank: the most recent replenishment of the International Development Assistance (IDA15 Replenishment) was the largest in World Bank history at $41.6 billion, marking a 42 percent increase from IDA14. Yet new commitments to education in Africa for FY2008 totaled $373 million, just over half of its FY07 total. For primary education, the drop was even more drastic, from $258 million in FY07 to $45 million.[8] This decreased investment in education in Africa seems to indicate that the World Bank is decreasing support of education to countries benefitting from the Catalytic Fund. It's an unsettling reversal of the Catalytic Fund's initial mission: instead of supporting donor orphans or closing existing financing gaps, it is being improperly used as an excuse to pull existing education support to poor nations.

By far, the two major donors have been the United Kingdom, having pledged $15 billion over ten years, and the Netherlands, which donates an impressive 0.8 percent of its GNP to poverty reduction each year while 15 percent of the total development budget is spent on education in developing countries. In addition to the contributions of the UK and the Netherlands, Norway, Ireland, and the European Commission have each offered substantial funds to the FTI's Catalytic Fund. While the United States has incrementally increased its allocations to basic education, due in large part to the work of congressional appropriator Nita Lowey (D-NY) and, earlier, Jim Kolbe (R-AZ), the United States still gives only 5 to10 percent as much per capita as the UK now commits to universal basic education. In summary, the collective funding needed for a serious effort to reach universal primary completion by 2015 falls dramatically short.

The lack of significant funding has had a major impact on lowering the ambition of developing countries. While national education plans endorsed by FTI often have a realistic vision for how to get the vast majority of children into first grade, very few are able to mobilize enough funds to reach the most vulnerable children, ensure universal primary completion and the transition to secondary school, and maintain a standard of quality in the classroom. In addition to insufficient levels of financial support, current funding cycles are generally too short. As mentioned in the history of the global education fund above, donor support of education must not only be contingent; it must also be predictable, adequate, and long-term. These conditions are especially necessary for maintaining political will, encouraging positive competition, eliminating school fees, and meeting the demand for teachers in the quest for universal basic education.

A. Financing and Maintaining Political Will

Without a doubt, the decision by a head of state to seek universal education will benefit the future of his or her nation. Yet from a political perspective, its benefits will be realized by his or her successor's successor, since the majority of returns on early, primary, and lower secondary education are realized over the period of a generation. In essence, the current leader will pay the costs of such a decision while future leaders will reap the benefits. Thus, when a leader chooses to take this bold step for the future, it is especially essential that donors help to ensure that he or she is not struggling to find the resources to keep that promise of quality basic education.

B. Financing and Fostering Positive Competition

A degree of the potential momentum for a global education fund lies in creating the conditions for "positive competition"—the notion that when other nations see one country following all the steps

for education reform and then being rewarded with donor commitments, they are impelled to ask, "What do we have to do on education to get such funding?" Conversely, when nations see their neighbors putting forth national education plans that are then not met with adequate response and support from the global community, that positive competition is replaced with a negative cynicism that questions whether donor nations will honor their part of the global education compact.

C. Financing and Eliminating School Fees Without Sacrificing Quality

Reaching universal education will require many countries to eliminate the practice of charging a per-child fee for public basic education. In the cases of Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, the world has seen that abolishing school fees can often lead to a virtual flood—millions of students entering schools within days and weeks of the policy change. Without adequate donor support, the increased number of students will not receive the necessary learning materials and will be crowded with eighty or even one hundred peers in a single classroom. In these cases, the bold effort and positive step toward universal education can lead to exploding class sizes and declining quality, while at the same time failing to ensure the funds needed for increased teacher recruitment, training, and deployment, as well as the disbursement of additional learning materials.

D. Financing and Long-Term Predictable Commitments to Avoid an Access-Quality Trade-Off

Without long-term predictable funding, what remains is the intolerable trade-off between access and quality. Increasing student enrollment and a stagnant or decreasing teaching corps leads to what may be the greatest challenge in education today: how to get enough trained teachers into classrooms to prevent sacrificing quality when rapidly expanding access. When increased access leads to ballooning school enrollments, additional teachers are needed to maintain the quality of instruction and prevent overcrowded classrooms. Given that teachers' salaries are recurrent costs that must be met every year (and even every month), ministers of finance may resist approving plans for a massive expansion of the teaching corps without the assurance that the source of funding for salaries will last beyond the typical two-to-three-year donor cycles. Since teachers' salaries constitute around 80 percent of a country's education budget and teacher recruiting, training, and deployment to critical areas can take two to three years, developing nations tend to not even start such ambitious expansions, constrained by the fear that funds will be cut off and teachers, students, and families will feel betrayed.

UNESCO has estimated that the world will need to recruit more than 18 million teachers by 2015, which includes increasing the current stock of teacher in sub-Saharan Africa from 2.4 million to 4 million.[9] In Nigeria, for example, expanding student enrollment and anticipated attrition of teachers means that more than 580,000 new teachers will be needed by 2015; India alone will need more than 2 million new teachers. To embolden poor nations to make serious efforts to ensure that even their most vulnerable children get a quality basic education and to prevent a trade-off between rising enrollment and quality, there must be widespread donor commitment to long-term and predictable funding that matches the national education plans set forth by these countries.

3. LACK OF CLARITY ON THE REAL GLOBAL FINANCING GAP

Despite all the efforts to mobilize resources to meet the external financing needs of each developing country, there is still little clarity on what actually constitutes the external financing gap. The current process for determining the need has six distinct flaws in determining the real financing gap for education.

A. Clarity on Financing: The Need to Think Beyond Primary Education

First, the universal education goals have been construed too narrowly. The Dakar Framework for Action's six Education for All goals collectively intended to promote a quality *basic* education, as indicated by references to "free and compulsory primary education of good quality," "learning needs of all young people and adults," "equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults," and "ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality."[10] While most definitions of basic education include at least eight years of schooling, the international goal too often focuses on achieving universal primary completion that is often aimed only at five to six years. Despite the fact that one rarely meets an education advocate or expert who believes that five years of primary education in poor nations is enough to ensure a quality basic education, throughout the main multilateral offices working on education—at the World Bank, OECD, UNESCO, and UNICEF—analysts continually project the financing gap for universal education as what is needed to provide five to six years of primary education.[11] To truly meet the real aspirations expressed in Dakar in 2000, there should be an aim to ensure at least eight years of quality education that includes the successful transition into at least lower secondary school. This reality should not be ignored simply because it forces the global community to acknowledge a larger financing gap and thus requires more of donor nations to meet their promises.

B. Clarity on Financing: Even a Focus on Primary Creates Demand for Pre-Primary and Secondary Education

Second, universal primary education will create greater demand for both pre-primary preparation and post-primary education opportunities. Even if the global community remains committed to only six years of education for all children, dramatically increasing rates of primary education completion will unquestionably increase the demand for more education beyond primary school. It is simply irresponsible for those estimating the financing gap to look at the costs of providing 100 percent enrollment and completion of sixth grade and not recognize the substantial increases in demand (and thus in costs) that will emerge for seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade education. Fulfilling even a portion of the demand for the lower secondary grades means hiring additional teachers with more education, especially in the areas of math and science, who demand higher salaries and need additional training. Evidence also shows that increased participation in pre-primary school programs results in higher quality learning outcomes and primary completion rates. Therefore, countries including pre-primary education with attention to quality need to account for the costs of ensuring low student-to-teacher ratios, special teacher training for the care of young children, and targeted learning materials that stimulate cognitive activities.

C. Clarity on Financing: Costing the Education for the Most Disadvantaged

Third, we need to work with a realistic understanding of the cost of reaching the most disadvantaged children. Those doing estimates of the cost of universal education per child have often relied on the following questionable analysis: that reaching the most disadvantaged children would not increase the overall estimates, because those extra costs would be offset by efficiency savings from the economies of scale caused by the overall effort to get a large number of additional children into school simultaneously. It should be clear to virtually everyone in the field of universal basic education that this is simply not true. Reaching the hardest-to-reach children—poor girls in rural areas, older children who have been child soldiers or child laborers, orphans, children affected by HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, and children with disabilities—requires special interventions that, while having shown to be effective, are more costly. One telling example of the extraordinary need for special interventions is the finding that between 2 percent and 10 percent of children with serious disabilities in low-income countries attend school.

Yet there is mounting evidence that targeted interventions for these most vulnerable children can be very successful. The Bangladesh Female Secondary School Assistance Program was established to improve girls' access to secondary education by providing targeted tuition stipends, while also instituting teacher training, performance incentives, and water and sanitation facilities. Girls' enrollment increased from 1.1 million in 1991 to 3.9 million in 2005 (with an increasing number of girls from disadvantaged and remote areas) and secondary school completion rates increasing from 39 percent to 58 percent. Successful education interventions for former child soldiers and other children of conflict often require intensive accelerated learning programs with low student-teacher ratios. Now, after achieving gender parity at the country level, the government is focusing its efforts on reaching economically and geographically disadvantaged girls (and boys).[12] Furthermore, programs that involve conditional cash transfers—financial incentives to parents to enroll and regularly send their children to school—have shown to be highly effective for increasing enrollment and attendance in Brazil and Mexico. These interventions could certainly be utilized in poor African communities, particularly for targeting children tasked with taking care of sick relatives or for orphans who have been taken in by other relatives or friends by reducing the costs—both direct and opportunity. While these policies increase enrollment and attendance rates, they are often not considered plausible because program costs exceed hypothetical average costs per student. The true financing gap estimates must take into account the cost of what real world interventions show is necessary to reach the hardest-to-reach children.

D. Clarity on Financing: Conflict of Interest and Systemic Downward Bias in Calculating Country-Level Financing Needs

Fourth, a conflict of interest exists in determining individual country financing gaps. Although one of the important innovations in designing the FTI was to focus endorsement decision-making among donors at the country level (thereby increasing donor harmonization at that level), this decision to focus on a country-level process has come with a downside. When country-level donors endorse a nationally owned education plan, they also report that country's financing gap. These donors, however, have an inherent conflict of interest that leads to a built-in downward bias in calculating the gap. If the donors agree to a larger (and presumably more accurate) financing gap, then they are essentially advertising their own failure to fully fund universal education in that country. Thus, these donor

agencies have an incentive to understate the size of the financing gap, and, because the applicant nations are dependent upon their donors for both current and future funding as well as their impending FTI approval, developing countries are in no position to demand a higher agreed-upon financing gap. The result of this is that there is a systemic bias to understate the financing gap in FTI nations.

E. Clarity on Financing: Benchmarking and Accounting for Incremental Contributions

A failure of the FTI and its organizational partners so far is that it has yet to develop a strong and clear definition of what constitutes an incremental increase in funding by donors to help a developing nation close its financing gap. If a low-income country has a $100 million external financing gap—and a donor commits $20 million annually, then the donor deserves credit for closing 20 percent of the external financing gap. Such an announcement should be able to put pressure on other donor nations to cover the remaining 80 percent. Yet the FTI has never achieved a straightforward method of reporting new contributions to close the financing gap for three reasons.

First, there is little clarity on how much donor nations already contribute to universal basic education. Therefore, when new commitments are announced, it is not clear whether these commitments represent additional financial pledges from countries or just a shifting of existing funds from bilateral giving to the Catalytic Fund. Second, contributions to the Catalytic Fund are often given in a lump sum—thus making the donor's true annual contribution unclear. Third, the FTI Secretariat has done a poor job of publicizing and benchmarking bilateral contributions, as compared to commitments to the pooled funds. This one-sided reporting does a disservice to the FTI because it fails to encourage countries that prefer bilateral contributions to do so for FTI nations since they do not anticipate being recognized for supporting the Fast Track Initiative. As the FTI Secretariat has sought to promote contributions to the Catalytic Funds, it has vastly underemphasized bilateral contributions to the point where some donors now wonder whether a bilateral contribution to an FTI nation even counts as an FTI contribution.

What is needed to strengthen the overall accounting of contributions and efforts to close national financing gaps are far better ways to 1) measure what nations are currently contributing on an annual basis to individual countries as a benchmark for assessing new contributions; 2) determine which countries are doing their share to close the financing gap; and 3) recognize and reward donors making an effort to close a financing gap for an FTI nation—whether it is done bilaterally or through a fund.

F. Clarity on Financing: Defining the Financing Gap

As noted above, there is a lack of clear understanding and consensus on the global financing gap for education. Estimates range from $7 billion to $16 billion annually—a wide disparity that can be explained, in part, by differing definitions of what should constitute a financing gap. Some estimates calculate the need for a subsection of countries (either FTI-endorsed or lowest-income countries). Some country-level estimates calculate the cost of providing universal education through grade five or six while others factor in pre-primary and/or lower secondary school. Reports on the financing gap do not always clearly indicate whether the reported need is the full cost of providing universal education or just the external component needed in addition to domestic resources committed. Finally, even when it is clear that the number represents the external financing need, such reports often fail

to indicate whether the number represents the total external need or the remaining external financing gap that must be closed after accounting for all commitments made.

4. INSUFFICENT OWNERSHIP, INDEPENDENCE, AND LACK OF CAPACITY FOR OVERALL COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT OF EXPANDED POOLED FUND

The FTI Secretariat supports the FTI Partnership by providing technical and administrative services for in-country activities, task teams, and committees, while monitoring and reporting on procedures and outcomes. In a reflection and vision document written upon vacating its position as steering committee co-chair, the Dutch government stated that, while the partnership has grown significantly since 2005, "It has not sufficiently matured."[13] With its available resources, the secretariat has done a commendable job. Yet, although the number of partner countries has nearly doubled over the last three years, the secretariat has remained a very small operation, currently working with only twelve full-time staff. While there is no doubt that the existing staff works hard to cover its numerous responsibilities, it is clear that the thirty-six endorsed countries, the dozens of potential partner countries, and donors cannot be adequately served by a dozen staff. Consider that the Global Fund for AIDS/TB/Malaria has a staff of five hundred. While the staff of an expanded education initiative should not balloon out to forty times its current size, there must be a strategy for increasing the capacity of the secretariat in line with the growth of the initiative. In addition to the responsibilities carried out at headquarters, the secretariat needs enough staff to be able to deploy teams to work on the ground in countries in several capacities; provide information and technical assistance to developing countries; carry out independent evaluations of the education sector capacity for fund consideration; and serve in a quick-response function for time-sensitive needs in postconflict and fragile states and conduct independent audits to determine the financing gap.

The development of the FTI into a well-known global initiative has also been hindered by the lack of broadly felt ownership of the process by its core partners. The initial cause for this lack of shared ownership within the Partnership can be traced back to the origins of the Fast Track Initiative within the World Bank staff, despite serious efforts at inclusion of civil society and other multilaterals from the very beginning. Significant efforts have since been made to create a distinct identity for the FTI, including having the FTI co-chaired by the country hosting the G8 and a non-G8 donor nation. In all of its communications now, great pains are taken to make clear that the FTI is governed by a representative collection of stakeholders, not solely by either the World Bank or even the FTI Secretariat itself. The co-chair system has been particularly effective in forcing the major donor countries to take greater ownership of the FTI process, something that must be considered as the FTI now moves toward instituting a single, independent chair. The FTI has also established a Steering Committee to guide policy direction that is more inclusive, including representatives from bilateral donor countries, multilateral organizations, developing country partners, and civil society.[14] The positive steps taken so far have simply not resolved the ownership problems with the major multilateral UN partners like UNICEF and UNESCO. The secretariat is still housed within the World Bank and many still consider its staff as World Bank staff, making a complete division from that institution nearly impossible.

Thus, in addition to a shortfall in staff capacity and a lack of broadly felt ownership for the process, the successful expansion of the FTI is hindered by the secretariat's lack of independence. Attempts to establish a separate identity while remaining within the bank have actually placed the secretariat in an

institutional no-man's land: while outsiders may regard the FTI as part of the World Bank, it receives very few of the perceived benefits of such a relationship, such as access to the knowledge, personnel, and financial resources of an institution that is already present in many current and future FTI countries.

Without a sense of shared ownership of the Fast Track Initiative, organizations look for ways to create their own niches in the broader education sector through independent initiatives. Thus, the result is fragmentation, created by one-off initiatives and parallel global processes that undermine the harmonization within a singular global education process. Currently, if someone compliments the FTI, it is unlikely that UNESCO or UNICEF would ever respond "Thank you," lacking a strong connection to the FTI. Donor partners have created ambitious programs with potential FTI countries outside of the global process, which dilutes what FTI endorsement signals to both the donor community and other developing nations. One example from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) involved the commitment of approximately US$395 million to India to be disbursed between 2007 and 2010 in order to achieve UPE by 2010. Through this announcement, DFID hoped to mobilize additional funding from the World Bank, USAID, the European Commission, UNICEF, and the UNDP—all of which are major donor partners of the FTI—and yet there was no strong movement to have India join the FTI.[15] This partner endorsement of India's education plan without coordination within the FTI process undermined the process by diluting what FTI endorsement signals to both the donor community and other developing nations. Had India gone through the FTI process, it would have been a significant boost for the global partnership.

5. LACK OF AWARENESS OF A GLOBAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Unquestionably, awareness of the FTI as *the* major global education initiative has grown in recent years, illustrated by its endorsement by the G8, the growing reputation of ministries of education within their own national governments and among donor countries, and increased recognition in the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government. After being exceptionally resistant in 2002 and 2003, the Bush administration announced in 2007 that it would commit significant bilateral aid for education to meet the financing needs of countries with education sector plans endorsed by the FTI. In Congress, the bipartisan Education for All Act of 2007 repeatedly stresses the importance of channeling support through the FTI, focusing U.S. assistance for education abroad on countries with comprehensive education plans endorsed by the FTI partnership.

However, due to a combination of its non-illustrative name, its origins within the World Bank, and its initial narrow focus on only the most high-performing countries, the Fast Track Initiative is not well understood as *the* global aid architecture for education. This lack of awareness leads to continued fragmentation and confusion among developing countries, NGOs, and donors. While almost all of the top newspaper columnists covering development issues know the basic details of the Global Fund for AIDS/TB/Malaria, only a tiny fraction are even aware of the Fast Track Initiative. It is not uncommon for knowledgeable people to call for establishing a major new education initiative or financing mechanism—completely unaware that the FTI exists. One example occurred at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, when an inspiring group of young leaders sought to increase aid to education by calling for a Global Education Fund—only to understand later, to their credit, that their idea would make sense only if it were possible to show how it was different from, *and improved upon,* the FTI. Even more recently, former British ambassador David Manning

wrote an op-ed in the *Financial Times* that proposed that the G8 support the establishment of a World Education Bank without even once mentioning the FTI.[16]

Six Steps Toward a True Global Compact on Universal Education

While the establishment of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative can be considered a notable accomplishment in and of itself, there are significant deficiencies that need to be addressed in order to be able to truly achieve universal education. Given both the FTI's successes and its shortcomings, it is clear that the next step toward a strong global education initiative is neither going with the status quo nor beginning again from scratch. While these existing gaps provide the initial case for serious reform, an even stronger theory of change case can be made when one considers the lessons learned from the current FTI, the other global health initiatives, and growing literature on foreign assistance. Achieving universal education will come through reforming the Fast Track Initiative into a strengthened single unified global education process for education aid that addresses conflict-affected and fragile states, is managed by a strong independent secretariat, ensures broad ownership of the process, maintains multiple channels of disbursement with a stronger and more professionally managed pooled fund, mobilizes a dramatic rise in funding , and focuses on increasing the amount and duration of external funding for education. Enacting the following six crucial reforms will contribute to building a mutual trust for the global compact for education and lead to a true Global Education Fund.

1. A SINGLE UNIFIED GLOBAL EDUCATION PROCESS

To achieve universal education for all children living in all countries, there must be a single unified global process that coordinates donors, recipient countries, and nongovernmental organizations. This process should begin with providing initial information and technical assistance to countries that express interest in improving education for their children and continue through until the final evaluation of implemented programs. A single unified global process must include representation from a diversity of stakeholders, and, more than just representation, it should be built around a system of participatory governance. The single process must also include conflict-affected and fragile states to ensure that the education of children of conflict does not fall through the cracks in the effort to really achieve education for all.

Participatory Governance and Maintaining Bottom-Up Origins. For a Global Education Fund to be truly global, it must bring together national donor agencies, developing country governments, civil society, foundations, and the private sector as equal partners in a common enterprise. While the country-led FTI process demonstrates a degree of participatory governance, the push for an even more participatory framework is supported by research on poverty-reduction strategies from the OECD Development Center, UNESCO, and World Bank, as well as specific evidence from the Global Fund for AIDS/TB/Malaria that greater representation from all partners has played a significant role in bringing about a sense of legitimacy of how the fund is used and its results.

While ministries of education most often will be at the center of strategic planning for the education sector, the role of national civil society, international partners assisting on the ground, foundations, and, when appropriate, the private sector should be included when bringing together all of the decision-makers into the new architecture. If one reason that a global fund for education did not succeed in the initial discussions in 2002 was an aversion to having yet another centralized, top-down process with decisions being made in Washington, Paris, London, Geneva, and Brussels, then maintaining and strengthening the country-level process for education plan design, international endorsement, and program implementation is all the more important. Including civil society as a true partner in the formulation of national education strategies would strengthen the authority of a Global Education Fund or a reformed FTI.

At the foundation of the country-led process of the FTI is the Local Education Group (LEG). It is made up of representatives from government, civil society organizations, local donors, multilaterals, and others supporting the education sector in the country. Similarly, in the Global Fund for AIDS/TB/Malaria framework, every country has a Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) that includes representatives from government, multilateral and bilateral agencies, NGOs, academic institutions, and the private sector, as well as people living with the diseases. CCMs are considered the cornerstone of the Global Fund for AIDS/TB/Malaria process, putting the principles of country-ownership and collaboration into practice: donor proposals addressing gaps in the national strategic plan do not come solely from governments but rather from the CCM—with all stakeholders having agreed on the activities and goals. In strengthening the unified global process, we should consider encouraging expanding the diversity of participation in LEGs, including the private sector, academic institutions, and local educators, such as teachers and administrators. Again, the FTI has begun to move in this direction, piloting its first partnerships with the private sector in Rwanda this year. Moreover, broadening participation in the LEG—or using more of a CCM model—could be especially helpful in countries affected by conflict or emergencies where governments may have reduced capacity and additional stakeholders or local governments are needed to design, implement, and evaluate education programs.

Single Process with Interim Status: As mentioned above, one central challenge for the FTI, and thus for any expansion into a new Global Education Fund, is how to maintain the authenticity of an international endorsement for the education plans of high-performing nations—the gold standard—while also building in a process that closes donor-recipient trust gaps while doing as much as possible as quickly as possible for children impacted by conflict and fragility. Fortunately, attention to these children and countries has been an area where effective reform is now under way. We have witnessed this reform developing from two distinct ways sources.

One major step was to recognize that there cannot be an "all or nothing" process for dealing with nations affected by conflict or emergencies. The existing exclusive process was leading to a serious problem. The FTI could say no to a fragile state—as it did with Liberia—and appear to be leaving a nation with strong political will but weak capacity out of the process. Alternatively, the FTI has endorsed nations where capacity was so weak that its endorsement then threatened to dilute the FTI's gold standard, jeopardizing the benefits of endorsement for other low-income countries that *do* have the capacity to successfully implement their national education plans.

Rather than choosing between these two stark options, it is clear that the smart way to deal with countries that are in conflict, postconflict, or otherwise fragile situations is to establish an interim

status linked to a mechanism for funding interim education plans. This expanded process would encourage the design and financial support of interim education plans that seek to take serious steps toward improved access to quality education without necessarily having a comprehensive strategy for getting every child into school in the immediate term. The inclusion of an interim stage makes sense for several reasons. First, it is not productive to have these countries design entire education-for-all plans that everyone knows are not realistic or practical. A global initiative should actively support realistic national plans that focus on making concrete forward progress through the implementation of some "quick-win" education programs and serious down payments on long-term universal education goals. Second, a growing body of research has found that education can play a role in mitigating conflict and instability in some situations, while if it is ignored or done poorly can actually contribute to fragility.[17] Finally, in a country just emerging from conflict, a coalition of the willing collaborating with a government constrained by weak capacity can work together on an interim education strategy to acquire financing and begin to implement the needed education programs to establish a sense of normalcy.

The second development in this reform process was the recognition of a need for specific financing strategies to meet the needs of an expanded global process. It is clear that the push to bring conflict-affected and fragile nations into a singular process will have little meaning unless there is a clear and quick-acting financing mechanism. *Covering Children of Conflict* describes two ways this can happen. One option is to expand the mandate of the FTI's Catalytic Fund so that it can provide funds to both interim and full FTI-endorsed countries. Another option is to build upon the new Education Transition Fund (ETF), which was established by UNICEF and the Dutch government to ensure that children affected by conflict or emergencies have access to education. Currently there are distinct steps being taken to transform the ETF into the primary source of pooled funding for interim-status countries, working within the FTI structure in close collaboration with the Catalytic Fund Committee and consistent with the Progressive Framework. Regardless of the specific mechanism employed, there is no doubt of the need for swiftness: the report that the Catalytic Fund has had a 5 percent initial spend rate is discouraging to donors and will be particularly detrimental to postconflict and fragile countries in need of immediate progress on education programs.

These are important developments: a new Global Education Fund will need to build upon this movement at the FTI toward a singular process with a financing mechanism for interim-status countries to ensure that it maintains both the gold standard designation while creating a quick response process and funding mechanism for nations affected by fragility or emerging from conflict. In establishing a truly unified global education initiative, donor nations or those charged with administering a new or expanded pooled fund for education would collectively review national education for all plans and then, guided by the financing gap established by an independence source (described in detail below), would seek to mobilize and coordinate pooled and bilateral resources for any nation that demonstrates a serious interest in improving education—regardless of its stage of social, political, or economic development.

2. AN INDEPENDENT SECRETARIAT WITH BROAD OWNERSHIP

One key to the success of a Global Education Fund will be a secretariat that can act quickly to work directly with nations—whether the central government, local education group, or humanitarian assistance cluster—to establish an immediate and viable plan of action. Including more countries—

many of which will have higher technical and financial needs due to conflict and fragility—into the process will create a demand for swift disbursement of information and technical assistance, as well as mobilizing additional resources. The need to deploy more staff and monitor more resources will require both additional human capacity and greater accountability.[18]

While the number of countries endorsed has grown steadily over the past six years, the FTI has yet to deal with the countries that face the most significant challenges in achieving universal education. Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are five countries that together are home to over 50 percent of all the world's out-of-school children. Particularly in cases of conflict-affected and fragile states, a singular global process must be sensitive to the need to move quickly to help restore stability, democracy, and normalcy. Borrowing a lesson from the Global Fund for AIDS/TB/Malaria, which is able to send portfolio managers to each of its countries three times a year, a strong and independent secretariat should be able to deploy staff to developing countries to work with in-country representatives to assess the status of the education sector, assist them in their efforts to develop an education strategy, and gather information on the country's financing needs. While remaining institutionally lean enough to not become yet another international bureaucracy, the secretariat itself should still have sufficient staff (or have them detailed from partner governments and multilateral agencies) to carry out the following tasks (which, at its current staffing level, remain largely unfulfilled):

- **Quick Response and Consultation Mechanism:** Staff deployed from the secretariat will communicate regularly with country-level stakeholders about the global education process and inform them of opportunities for technical assistance and funding.
- **Independent Evaluation of Pooled Fund Applicant Countries:** While country endorsement by the local donor group remains an essential component to ensure that the process remains led by the country, an independent team from—or commissioned by—the new Global Education Fund's secretariat who is familiar with an individual country's education sector would provide additional perspective when FTI partners are considering specific funding decisions.
- **Broader Ownership of the Global Education Initiative:** An expanded governance structure should allow opportunities for partner organizations to play important roles—such as UNICEF taking a larger role with postconflict nations and the interim process.
- **Act as an Auditor of the Process**: While many may resist the idea of additional staff to avoid creating yet another bureaucracy, there are levels of staff capacity that are simply reckless in light of the amount of money and responsibility an expanded global education initiative would and should have. An expanded secretariat could more effectively oversee the process to ensure accountability and transparency from all stakeholders.

Independence: In order to ensure a widespread buy-in of a reformed global education initiative that multilateral organizations and bilateral donor agencies can take both responsibility and credit for, the establishment of an independent secretariat— one that is not physically housed within one of the partner institutions—will be necessary. Representation of the multilateral partners like UNICEF and UNESCO, the major bilateral donors, and leading civil society groups as secretariat staff and members of the steering committee may reduce the likelihood of individual organizations, eager to fulfill their own strategic plans and establish identifies, creating parallel education processes.

Ownership: Additionally, to ensure that partners feel responsible for the success of the global education initiative, it must be clear that they are contributing in a specific way. Leveraging the com-

parative advantages of each organization will strengthen the overall global process. Building off the identified shortcomings of the FTI illustrated above, there are two clear roles that should be filled by the primary UN partners: UNICEF and UNESCO.

As mentioned above, countries affected by conflict, emergencies, or that are otherwise fragile have previously been left out of the global education process. With the recent decision by the FTI Steering and Catalytic Fund Committees to establish an interim status and use the UNICEF–Dutch Education Transition Fund as the financing mechanism for the interim status countries, UNICEF's experience and expertise working in conflict and emergency situations is already being tapped into. The efforts toward a true global education initiative should follow this lead by utilizing organizational expertise in a coordinated manner under the umbrella of a Global Education Fund.

It is also clear that there must be an independent evaluation of the true cost of achieving universal education and donor shares of that financing gap. UNESCO, its Institute for Statistics, and the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) should be tasked with evaluating the true cost for each nation to enroll and provide every child with a quality basic education. After knowing how much the developing country will contribute to its education sector, a country's total external financing gap can be calculated. The secretariat should work with UNESCO to determine the total external financing gap for education globally and each donor's share. Currently, the GMR is extremely helpful in acquiring, analyzing, and disseminating annual information about the progress toward Education for All as well as special issues such as quality teaching and early childhood development. However, with additional capacity, the GMR could fulfill the critical role of independent determiner of the financing gap in individual FTI nations—thus correcting the conflict of interest and downward bias that currently hurts the accuracy and legitimacy of such estimates.

3. A GLOBAL EDUCATION FUND SHOULD FOCUS BOTH ON COORDINATED BILATERAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND A STRONGER, BETTER-MANAGED POOLED FUND

Building on the lessons learned from financing in both the education and health sectors, it is clear that maintaining and strengthening multiple channels of disbursement—not limiting the new architecture to focusing only on a single pooled fund—would ensure the greatest ability to increase overall levels of funding. National decisions regarding channels of international aid disbursement are highly dependent upon the preferences of individual donor countries and are influenced by current political party governance and the specific nature of strategic relations with recipients. Indeed evidence shows that, given the option to do either bilateral support or Catalytic Fund contributions in the current FTI process, very few nations have opted to give funds solely through the Catalytic Fund. Thus, those who have called for a single "Global Education Bank" must have a sound theory for why a change from the dual system of accounting for bilateral and pooled contributions to a system that only allows donors to deposit funds into one collective pool would increase the overall level of funding available to education in developing countries. While there is no magic proportion for splitting global funding between bilateral and pooled contributions, a new Global Education Fund would most likely need to increase the amount disbursed through the pooled financing mechanism over the current Catalytic Fund levels in its efforts to seriously close the financing gap.

Pooled Fund: A new Global Education Fund should include an expanded and more professional pooled fund than the current Catalytic Fund process within the Fast Track Initiative. This pooled mechanism would build upon the best practices from the existing health funds and employ a stronger

endorsement process that includes developing nation peer review, a regular replenishment mechanism, and harmonized arrangements among donors. An expanded pooled fund can help to address some of the core financing issues. In terms of ensuring more predictable funds, a pooled financing mechanism helps to smooth any gaps in individual commitments. Moreover, with an increasing number of conflict-affected and fragile states applying for funding for their interim education plans, a strong pooled fund helps to spread the risk among all fund donors. While there is no magic proportion for splitting global funding between bilateral and pooled contributions, a new Global Education Fund would most likely need to increase the amount disbursed through the pooled financing mechanism over the current Catalytic Fund levels in its efforts to seriously close the financing gap.

Bilateral Contributions: Even with a larger pooled funded, however, it would be a mistake to throw out the "virtual fund" aspect of the current FTI initiative that allows donors to contribute bilaterally while still part of the single, coordinated global education process. Coordination of financing and implementation with other bilateral donors and the pooled mechanism will continue to be essential, as will accurate accounting of bilateral contributions to Global Education Fund countries. The reformed and strengthened Global Education Fund should maintain support for both bilateral and pooled contributions, counting both toward closing the overall financing gap.

Innovative Disbursement: Fund disbursement is ripe for innovation. Lessons from the global health field show successful examples of using private banks in developed countries to channel money to private banks in developing countries. These private banks then work with local partners to disburse the money to where it is needed on the ground. While the national government still maintains oversight and regulates the bank system in these cases, it is not overly burdened with controlling finance delivery. Furthermore, multilateral development banks (MDBs)—such as the African Development Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank—already bring together recipient and donor countries and should be incorporated into the global education process as true partners.

4. A DRAMATIC INCREASE OF FUNDING AND ITS LONG-TERM PREDICTABILITY

Regardless of which estimate one uses, it is known that the financing gap for education is significant. Donor nations have failed to uphold their end of the global compact—the assurance that sufficient funding would be available to any low-income country with a national education plan that seeks to ensure that every child has access to a quality basic education. Any new global education initiative must address the clear need to systematically and dramatically increase the levels of funding committed, as well as the duration of funding cycles. To do so requires gaining clarity on the actual need in each country and then holding both national governments and donors accountable for their commitments to education.

Clarity on the True Financing Gap: An understanding of the full need is essential in any serious effort to significantly increase the level of funding committed to education in a systematic way. A fully staffed and independent secretariat working together with UNESCO's Institute for Statistics and the Global Monitoring Report should be able to create an independent analysis of the costs of universal education in each country and the ability then to calculate the true external financing need. Having a

clear understanding of a country's exact financing need will also help to ensure additionality—in terms of both donor funding and national government expenditures on education. A clear understanding of baseline contributions ensures that donors do not simply channel the same level of funding through new modalities and that national governments do not reduce their own funding of education as a result of receiving additional external support. Furthermore, as mentioned above, a true estimate must adequately calculate the cost of providing eight years of quality education, as well as the additional expenditures of effective interventions that provide education to the most disadvantaged children.

With greater clarity on the true financing gap, education advocates will be able to illustrate each donor's fair share more effectively, and hold heads of state accountable by naming and shaming who is and is not living up to his or her global obligations. Such accountability will help create a critical mass of leaders, armed with accurate data on financing needs and increased civil society advocacy in both developed and developing countries to help push forward on upholding the global compact on education and achieving universal education by 2015.

Encouraging Long-Term Commitments: As illustrated above, a real commitment to achieving education for all means that both donors and recipients need to pledge to remain for the long haul. Unlike an infrastructure project that may be completed with a one-time grant, we know that achieving quality basic education requires long-term and predictable funding to hire more trained teachers to ensure that expansions in access do not lead to a tradeoff with quality.

A new Global Education Fund must strategically address the need for a system for ensuring ongoing contributions, both through regular replenishments of multilateral funds and continuing bilateral commitments. Therefore, there must be a strong and powerful push through all financing modalities to ensure long-term and predictable funding that can help deal with the recurrent costs of a major expansion of a nation's teaching corp. In pushing for this new norm, it is important not to let the perfect be the enemy of the good. It is true that there are very few mechanisms in place to guarantee that a donor nation will not pull back on a long-term commitment. Yet even if the global community is incapable of devising a foolproof long-term financing mechanism, that reality should not be an excuse for a global development process to not require donor nations to make promises of long-term and predictable funding for developing nations. From a political standpoint, such a public promise by a donor nation will not be easy to backtrack on. And, as donor nations come to honor these commitments, it will build up trust in developing nations with ambitious plans for achieving universal basic education that such donor pledges are reliable.

In the United States, the current Millennium Challenge Corporation now offers initial compacts between developing nations and the U.S. government that typically last for five years, with the option to renew based on country performance and measurable outcomes. Though this compact cannot be legally enforced, it is not an easy commitment for the United States to backtrack on. In its own commitment to education and development, the United Kingdom has pledged to sign ten-year Development Partnership Arrangements with developing nations. In September 2008, for example, the UK signed a ten-year agreement with the government of Ghana to increase children's access to education and help women survive childbirth. A new Global Education Fund should also seek to design its new and improved pooled fund so that it encourages longer-term and more predictable funding. One way by which the Global Fund for AIDS/TB/Malaria has encouraged longer-term commitments in its regular replenishment process is to make seats on the governing board contingent upon donors making multiyear commitments. Linking its voice in governance

decisions to a donor's adherence to funding commitments may represent progress toward ensuring higher levels and longer duration of funding. In the spirit of a global compact for education, there is no reason why monetary commitments and decision-making voices should be entirely disconnected.[19]

5. BUILDING MUTUAL TRUST FOR A GLOBAL COMPACT—KEEPING FUNDING PROMISES, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND A FOCUS ON ACCESS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Inherent in all of these recommendations is the central notion that strengthening mutual trust within the global community is essential to truly realizing the global compact on education. Clarifying the real needs of countries and a serious effort to increase both overall funding levels and the duration of funding will undoubtedly demonstrate the importance of establishing a true global compact between donors and developing countries to together achieve universal education

For recipient nations, upholding their side of the global compact means, first of all, improving mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency. As both bilateral donors and contributors to a strengthened pooling mechanism seek to offer more substantial long-term resources, these decision-makers will feel greater pressure from their constituencies to show that resources are reaching their intended targets and serving their intended purposes. Countries that are emerging from conflict or are otherwise fragile will need to make significant strides—with assistance from the global community—to put in place mechanisms that provide extra-accountability mechanisms to close any perceived trust gaps from donors. Successful efforts, such as the individual bank accounts set up in Kenya to ensure accountability for funds disbursed to localities, are examples of ensuring donors that their money is getting where it should to fund education.

Second, we know that improvements in education cannot be measured by inputs alone so increased funding will also heighten the focus on achieving learning outcomes. There is a growing movement to focus not only on making sure that the money is *going* where it should (disbursed effectively to local school districts and individual schools as appropriate), but also that the funds are *doing* what they should. As the formation of the Hewlett-Gates Quality Education in Developing Countries initiative demonstrates, even as countries are working hard to get all their children into school, they must also be endeavoring to get all their children learning in school. This parallel emphasis on quality means that countries must be focused on ensuring that that beyond more "butts in chairs," there is learning happening in the classrooms. For developing nations, therefore, this mutual compact would mean that bolder and predictable financing would require a greater responsibility on focusing on learning outcomes. While this new emphasis is crucial, donors must use sound judgment in emphasizing learning outcomes. There is a danger in forcing very poor nations to spread their resources even thinner by overly burdening such countries with extensive testing requirements. Likewise, even in developed nations, interventions to improve quality often involve experimentation and evaluation. Donors must be sure not to punish educators making good faith efforts to improve learning outcomes by withdrawing funding too quickly as opposed to mutually understanding what reforms may be required. Donor-recipient relations would be improved through the use of measures that judge levels of effort as well as an understanding of how outside factors (droughts, HIV/AIDS, expanded enrollment of very disadvantaged children) might affect overall numbers in the short term. What will be most important is for this emphasis to put a constant pressure to reform to ensure

movement toward better learning outcomes. One important initial step is the one that has been proposed by the Hewlett-Gates Quality Education in Developing Countries Initiative, the Department of State and USAID Basic Education Coordinator, and Pratham's Read India initiative: a focus on ensuring that children are reading by third grade. A new Global Education Fund must focus on expanding access *and* promoting quality while not allowing these two goals to be seen as in tension with each other. This new fund must also find fair, reasonable, and appropriate means to make learning outcomes part of a results-based assessment to inform the expansion and continuation of full funding.

For donors and the secretariat, maintaining their side of the global compact involves transparency, coordination, quick action in the short term, and a long-term commitment to success. If low-income countries are to trust that their nationally owned education plans will be the focal point for all efforts to get all children into school and learning, then all the donors must demonstrate their backing of the plan by coordinating their assistance through general sector support or support of specific components of the education plan. Donors and those managing the pooled funds must commit to making sure that the money is dispensed quickly. Particularly in the case of fragile states, quick implementation of programs can help mitigate backwards slippage in the near term as the country establishes its own stability. Finally, donors must also be in it for the long haul. Funding for development, and especially for education, must explicitly address the fact that to ensure that a child acquires a basic education that can realistically improve his or her well-being, there must be enough money to support eight years of education and funding must be long-term and predictable enough to allow for the recurrent costs of a serious expansion of a trained teaching force. Thus, donors and national governments together must be able to ensure that a sufficient number of teachers are trained for both primary and secondary school, that there are enough textbooks and learning materials for the growing number of students, and that transportation costs and other indirect costs of schooling are taken into account.

6. NEW NAME, NEW BRAND, NEW LAUNCH

Simply calling for a new process with a new name—but without details on the needed reforms grounded in the experience of the existing FTI process—will only be a symbolic gesture that may garner some buzz, but will not accomplish the serious reform needed to achieve quality basic education. Yet we must also recognize that names and brands do matter. Even after six years, the FTI is not universally known, and its name is not irrelevant to that fact. The lack of understanding and awareness of the Fast Track Initiative, coupled with a uncertainty regarding the size of the financing gap and each donor's financial share have all hurt momentum in education and, subsequently, the accountability of donor nations who signed on the dotted line in Dakar in 2000 but have not met their obligations.

This year, at the halfway mark to 2015 and the Millennium Development Goal target, we have seen increased interest in reinvigorating momentum toward achieving universal education. At the UN Secretary General's High-Level Event on the MDGs in September, the Global Campaign for Education-led "Class of 2015: Education for All" initiative pledged to provide global leadership to achieve the education goals with the support of several heads of state as well as leaders from the private sector, faith-based groups, multilateral organizations, and civil society. If major heads of state are willing to step up and lead a new effort on universal education, then it would be best to do so in conjunction with a rebranding and relaunching of a reformed Education Fast Track Initiative as a Global

Education Fund. If the global education community comes to believe that it should not be called a "fund" because it maintains the capacity for bilateral contributions, it should still be called something far more accessible, such as the Global Compact for Education. In the relaunching moment, heads of state could announce that, after six years of working to create a global education architecture through the FTI, it is now time to build on that foundation set by the FTI to take universal basic education to the next level.

With this newly launched architecture, G8 and other donor nation heads of state would make a major commitment to long-term sustainable funding to provide education for all children—regardless of the state of political, economic, or social development of their countries—through the creation of a single progressive process. With a strengthened architecture that provides broader ownership of the process and includes all children—a new launch by a critical mass of heads of state that includes a new name and a bold commitment to long-term predictable and contingent funding is what is needed today for the global community to at last keep its education promises to the poor but aspiring children of our world.

Opportune Timing?

Even though the negative fiscal effects of the global financial crisis could put strains on donor nations' commitments to such global poverty-reduction goals as universal education in 2009 and 2010, there are other more positive trends that suggest that this could be a moment of progress for education for all. From a U.S. perspective, the proposed bipartisan Education for All Act of 2007 is highly consistent with the concept behind a Global Education Fund. Although the EFA bill was initially only introduced by New York Democrats Senator Hillary Clinton and Representative Nita Lowey in 2004, by its reintroduction in 2007, it had been joined by Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR) and Representative Spencer Bachus (R-AL). Furthermore, the bill has gained additional cosponsors on both sides of the aisle since its introduction. Through its requirement that the United States commit its fair share to reduce the global financing gap, its support of strong engagement with the FTI and nationally owned education plans, and its ensuring that children of conflict and other vulnerable populations are explicitly covered, the EFA bill places the United States in an excellent position to be a leader in international efforts toward a new Global Education Fund.

During the 2008 presidential campaign, Senator Barack Obama called for a Global Education Fund with a $2 billion a year commitment from the United States. This September, he reaffirmed his commitment to erase the global primary education gap by announcing his intention to sign the Education for All Act and the importance of establishing a Global Education Fund to hold the United States to do its part to ensure education for all.[20] Moreover, in his own bid for the presidency, Vice President-elect Joseph Biden stated, "I cosponsored the Education for All Act and I have long supported universal primary education. It's the foundation of democracy, an investment in the future, and the most powerful tool we have to empower women. Universal primary education is, simply put, a fundamental need."[21]

One of the two original cosponsors, Hillary Clinton, has been named secretary of state designate, while the other, Nita Lowey, holds the powerful chairmanship of the House State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee. Finally, even with the financial crisis and fiscal pressures, there has been an expressed desire by the new administration to highlight the importance of "soft" power to help promote peace and rebuild the recently tarnished U.S. image. A greater connection is being drawn by the foreign policy community between quality public education and providing young people globally with more positive—and less destructive—opportunities for their futures.

Among other donor nations, the Netherlands has maintained its historic leadership by making a major contribution to UNICEF for education in countries affected by conflict and fragility; Prime Minister Gordon Brown has kept education a major focus of UK development assistance; and the European Union is becoming increasingly engaged in support for education for all in low-income countries. This could be the opportunity for the global community to make universal basic education its next big priority for global development and poverty reduction while providing the new U.S. president and a new Congress with the opportunity to achieve the legacy of having helped launch a major

global education initiative. This commitment to quality education for all could be the primary means to win the hearts and minds of the global community.

Endnotes

*I would like to thank Anda Adams, associate director of the Center for Universal Education, for her excellent assistance in all aspects of this paper.

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2. Gene Sperling, "Filling the Glass: Moving the FTI Towards a True Global Compact," speech delivered at the FTI Partnership Meeting, Beijing, China, December 1, 2005, available at www.cfr.org/publication/9737/filling_the_glass.html?breadcrumb=%2Fbios%2Fbio%3Fid%3D9151.
3. Current discussions addressing the governance of the FTI include the recommendation to switch to a single independent, nonvoting chair that would serve in a full-time post for three years. The rationale for the change is to ensure a more effective and sustained leadership. The chair's responsibilities will include help the steering committee make decisions on strategy and policy; monitor the implementation of decisions; take a lead role in resource mobilization; and speak on behalf of the FTI as needed, including raising its political and public profile.
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