Concept Note

Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy for a Mutual Accountability Based on Results

April 2010

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Following the preliminary results of the mid-term evaluation, the Board of Directors (BoD) tasked the FTI Secretariat in February 2010 with the development of a mutual accountability framework based on results.

The purpose of this note is to present the preliminary design of a Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy to improve the accountability of the Partnership. In order to set it up, three tools are being developed:

- A results framework
- An accountability matrix
- An evaluation process

MONITORING

A functioning monitoring system should provide the information required for the management and decision-making of the Partnership and is a necessary tool for a robust evaluation process.

The ***Results Framework*** describes the set of objectives agreed on by the EFA FTI Partnership. Each objective is associated with assessment criteria and activities to achieve these objectives. The goal of the results framework is to measure and monitor progress in implementing the interventions of the Partnership. The work currently undertaken has its roots in the mid-term evaluation, especially Appendix VI, "M&E Framework and Impact Evaluation," which introduced a logical framework "as a basis for discussion" [p. 5].

A consultation process among the Partnership will be organized in order to finalize the M&E strategy by the end of 2010. The evaluation report states that "this process should be seen as an opportunity to articulate a common interpretation of the objectives of the Partnership and what the partnership will do for them to be achieved. It is envisaged that the search for clear indicators and agreed means of verification/data collection processes will forge joint understanding of FTI potentials and limitations among stakeholders and reach agreement on what exactly the partnership attempts to accomplish, how likely it is that the selected activities will lead to the accomplishment of these targets and what the implications are in term of resources" [p.12].

The goal of the ***Accountability Matrix*** is two-fold: first, it defines roles and responsibilities for all partners implicated in meeting the goals as specified in the results framework. Second, it helps to monitor the extent to which they have fulfilled their commitments and provides a mechanism to readjust goals and performance indicators. Under the current Partnership arrangement, "activities are vague and left to the discretion of the partners and partners cannot be held to account if they did not implement them" [Mid-term evaluation, p. 2, Annex VI]. It is suggested, that over the course of the consultation process used to develop the results framework, partners will engage in finalizing the accountability matrix. In this way, we can ensure that each partner has the opportunity to explain how it will contribute to achieving the results defined in the results framework.

The ***Results Framework and the Accountability Matrix*** are inter-related. For instance, a key donor responsibility is to provide sustainable funding for countries to meet agreed-upon targets in their Education Sector Plans (ESPs). If, however, funding commitments fluctuate or are not adequately predictable, the ESP goals might be subject to modifications in accordance with the magnitude of the fluctuations. Thus, accountability can be traced to its original source, in this example, the fluctuations in funding.

Finally, while the 2002 ***Indicative Framework*** was never intended to become an M&E instrument, in practice, it was often perceived as such. Neither the results framework nor the accountability matrix is intended to replace the Indicative Framework. These instruments will guide all efforts at measuring results on a partnership-wide basis and will empower all partners to monitor the overall performance of EFA FTI. However, the dialogue to develop an education strategy might be enriched by the availability of information and benchmarks on policies that would be effective to support the design of education reform strategies. In this context, it would be useful to update the Indicative Framework, as a basis to support good policymaking at the country level, but not as a set of conditionalities to monitor.

EVALUATION

The midterm evaluation concluded that the EFA FTI objectives were not monitored. The development of the results framework and the accountability matrix addresses this major design gap. At the same time, there is a need to develop an evaluation component to assess the impact of the EFA FTI Partnership on the education sector. Nevertheless, as previous experience and current practice show, there are clear limitations to how much and how deep we will be able to show direct cause-effect linkages. Among the constraints are:

- ***Value-added.*** A common observation in regard to EFA FTI's value-added is that EFA FTI is more than the Catalytic Fund. It is also about promoting aid effectiveness, predictability of funding, and ensuring good quality of education sector plans. Thus, the ultimate goal of the M&E strategy will be to assess the overall impact of EFA FTI rather than isolated components. Likewise, it is very difficult to attribute specific impacts to EFA FTI financing due to the variety of sources (domestic, multilateral, bilateral) and modalities (project-based, technical assistance, pooled funds, general budget support, sector budget support) already in place.
- ***Baselines.*** It is difficult to establish baselines in regard to EFA FTI's performance at the country level because many countries already have FTI-compatible efforts before endorsement occurs.

That is to say, EFA FTI promotes but does not initiate a country's ESP alignment efforts. It is intended to complement existing interventions.

- ***Impact.*** In terms of demonstrating the impact of EFA FTI as a good value for the money and to respond to the issue of what is the investment buying in relation to EFA FTI results, it is also an issue of partnership communications rather than an M&E issue alone. The M&E strategy will provide the inputs for a communications strategy that is missing from current partnership actions. In particular, those related to advocacy, fundraising, and leadership activities. The need to revise all aspects of FTI's communications among board members, civil society and governments cannot be understated.

After assessing these difficulties, the mid-term evaluation concluded that a rigorous quantitative evaluation of the full impact of the FTI is not possible. To overcome this issue, it was proposed to undertake an ex-post evaluation of the FTI after five years and to reinforce it with studies on specific reforms supported by FTI.

The ex-post evaluation will have a clearer and more efficient starting point than the mid-term evaluation did, with the development of a Results Framework and if FTI's monitoring systems are strengthened and adjusted to collect information on all the selected indicators.

The additional studies that can be undertaken before 2015 would focus on core education policy questions that the FTI would have supported more particularly, for example, aid effectiveness, assessment of learning outcomes, support to marginalized populations, etc. Moreover, useful studies can be undertaken in countries that have been endorsed for a long term.

RISK ANALYSIS

Both the final design and actual rollout of this M&E strategy will require ongoing dialogue and fine-tuning by all stakeholders in order to avoid several of the pitfalls identified in similar efforts undertaken by other global initiatives. Among these issues are:

- Avoiding a top-down approach to implementation. For the M&E strategy to succeed, both the milestones and indicators need to be derived through a consultative process that is consistent with the goals stated in the national Education Sector Plans.
- Avoiding the creation of unsustainable reporting burdens on partners while using existing sources of information as much as possible. Countries should not be required to develop new types of information tailored to meet FTI-driven expectations. At the same time, all partners need to be aware of new and emerging issues that may require policy responses driven by existing or different types of data. In the latter case, the Partnership will be held accountable for providing the supporting mechanisms for capacity development. This is to reduce the existing ambiguity and lack of attribution of results to the implementation of EFA FTI.
- In the absence of rewards/sanctions, monitoring and evaluation becomes less effective for the accountability process and management.

TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. The Secretariat will contract a firm to support it in finalizing the new M&E strategy. The FTI Secretariat has prepared the terms of reference for this task (see Annex). The assignment is scheduled to start on **September 1, 2010,** and will end on **December 31, 2010**.
    a. The selected contractor will deliver two progress reports. The first progress report will provide a model of the M&E strategy that the FTI Board of Directors will vet.
    b. The second progress report will contain the results of the Board's input plus all of the research and preliminary findings from the work carried out in FTI partner countries.
    c. The third and final report will present a fully developed and Board-vetted M&E strategy.
2. An M&E Strategy Steering Committee will be set up concurrently with the first task to support and provide guidance to the work, including the development of selection criteria as well as providing ongoing oversight of the M&E contracting activities.