The accomplishments in the education sector for countries in the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI) are tremendous: 15 million more children enrolled in primary school between 2001 and 2006 in Sub-Saharan African countries that have joined FTI and 28 percent more children enrolled in primary school in 2006 compared to five years earlier in all the regions combined. At the present rate, the majority of FTI countries will achieve an 80 percent primary school completion rate (the percentage of children entering the last grade of primary school) by 2015.

In spite of these unprecedented gains in the education field, much more remains to be done. Around 75 million children worldwide are still out of school of which half are in Sub-Saharan Africa. As a result of the global food crisis and the economic downturn, many governments are going through drastic budget cuts which impact social services such as education. Millions of people are pushed back into poverty and many parents are facing the painful choice of sending their children to work rather than to school, so that they can contribute to the household income.

The international community cannot let this happen. Education—particularly for girls—is critical. It allows people to live productive and healthy lives, helps them build communities, empowers women, and allows countries to enjoy sustained economic growth.

*Education is the lifeblood for a nation’s future economic growth and prosperity.*

— Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations
EFA FTI: A Global Partnership to Achieve Education for All

FTI was launched in 2002 as a global partnership between donor countries and low-income countries to ensure accelerated progress toward universal primary education. Developing countries make a commitment to prepare and implement sound and sustainable education plans and to increase domestic financing for primary education. Donor countries, multilateral organizations, and civil society organizations then commit themselves to align their support to these education sector plans through increased cooperation and financial support.

FTI focuses on achieving primary education for all children by 2015. The initiative includes all major donors for education—more than 30 bilateral, regional, and international agencies and development banks. It provides support to all low-income countries that express a serious commitment to reach universal primary education by offering technical assistance (knowledge sharing and guidelines on education-related issues) and financial support.

FTI helps donors and low-income partner countries work together to ensure that education aid is better coordinated and thus more effective. FTI endorsement signals to current and new donors that a country’s education sector plan is sound, sustainable, and worthy of support.

FTI donor partners mobilize additional funding, including the Catalytic Fund, for those countries lacking sufficient donor assistance.

In sum, FTI aims to accelerate universal primary education by promoting:

- More efficient aid for primary education
- Sustained increases in aid for primary education
- Adequate and sustainable domestic financing for education
- Increased accountability for results in the education sector
- Mutual learning on what works
- Sound sector policies in education

— Gordon Brown, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
The Catalytic Fund (CF), the Education Program Development Fund (EPDF) and the new Education Transition Fund (ETF) are the main additional FTI sources of financing available to countries:

- The Catalytic Fund provides financial assistance to FTI countries that have developed a Poverty Reduction Strategy and have education sector plans endorsed by the local donors.
- The multi-donor EPDF enables low-income countries to join FTI and accelerate progress toward universal primary education. The EPDF provides technical support and builds the capacity required to prepare and implement a sound education plan.
- The urgent needs of fragile states are addressed by the UNICEF-managed Education Transition Fund which will be operational from mid-2009 onwards. It provides a rapid and flexible financing mechanism for education in (post-) conflict situations. The fund will operate within the broad FTI structure.

The FTI partnership is overseen by a Board of Directors that provides overall policy guidance and coordination. The Board of Directors is composed of members that represent the main constituencies of the FTI partnership and includes representatives from low-income partner countries; donor countries; multilateral agencies, including the World Bank, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); and civil society organizations working in primary education.

The FTI Secretariat provides technical and administrative support to the FTI partnership, including organizing all FTI meetings, working with all partners to promote effective communication and data reporting at all levels, and providing quality support to planning and monitoring processes to strengthen the in-country process. The FTI Secretariat is hosted by the World Bank.
Progress in reaching Universal Primary Education: Success stories from Madagascar, Ghana, Mongolia, Yemen and Guyana

Many of FTI’s low-income countries are making steady progress in education. These outcomes are positively affecting their populations, local communities, and families at many levels.

‘Sounds from the classroom’ introduces Bako and Bernard Rabemanantso from Madagascar who are proud of their nine-year old daughter’s mathematics skills. She will be the first of their eight children going beyond fifth grade and hopes to continue to high school. It tells the story of Princess Owusu, a grade two student of the Taifa school in Accra, Ghana who just loves to come to school to play and eat her bowl of boiled ‘yam and kontomire’. Virtually, all children in Guyana – including those belonging to indigenous tribes in the hinterlands of the Amazon – now have their own textbooks, proper classrooms and get an energy boost every day with the school meals. It talks about Najiba in Yemen, who still knows a lot of girls in her small village who do not go to school and who dreams about becoming a teacher. And it tells the story of Dorj, a herder in Mongolia’s remote steppe who takes his young son to a mobile pre-school by horseback – something that was unimaginable when he was a child.

The Education for All Fast Track Initiative is a compact that connects donors with low-income countries on the basis of their own education plans. These plans are ambitious and will send children like Bako and Bernard’s daughter in Madagascar, like Princess in Ghana and like Najiba in Yemen to school and give them a chance for a proper education.

FTI was designed to help all low-income countries in their education goals. Within two years, it will be supporting almost 50 of the poorest countries in the world.

To fight extreme stupid poverty, getting kids in schools is one of the best investments we can make.

— Bono, U2 Singer/Activist

Photo: Giacomo Pirozzi/UNICEF (Mozambique)
MADAGASCAR:
Better trained teachers keeping children at school

On school holidays, nine-year-old Tsitohaina Rabemanantsoa takes turns with her brothers and sisters selling fritters and sandwiches during local festivals in the village of Ambohimandrosa in Madagascar. She has no difficulties taking orders from the clients and giving back the change, even when they pay with banknotes of 5,000 ariary, the second-highest note in local currency.

“She is in the third grade of primary school, and she is pretty good in mathematics,” her mother, Bako Rabemanantsoa, says proudly.

Tsitohaina is the second youngest of the family’s eight children. Her father hopes to see her succeed in school. “I hope she will go to high school,” says her father, Bernard Rabemanantsoa, “it will allow her to have a better life than us.”

One of Tsitohaina’s older siblings never went to school, three attended two years of primary school, and two did not go beyond the fifth year. Tsitohaina’s parents are farmers and, occasionally, street vendors, who often have difficulties making ends meet. Their older children could not continue their education due to financial hardship.

But since primary school fees were abolished in 2003, Bako and Bernard have not had

For me, education is so crucial because everything goes with it, like healthy politics and development.

— Angelique Kidjo, Singer and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador

Photo: Giacomo Pirozzi/UNICEF (Madagascar)
trouble sending their two youngest children to the village school.

“The state provides school bags and school materials, which considerably reduces our expenses” says Bako. “Currently, all the children of the village, even those from very poor families, attend school,” added Bernard, who is also the president of the parent-school association.

The same positive trend can be seen throughout the country. In a 2007 report, FTI partner agency UNICEF mentioned that the “vast reform of basic education started in 2003 within the framework of the Education for All program, led to a significant increase in primary school participation.”

The total number of children enrolled in primary school increased from 2 million in 2000-2001 to 4 million in 2006-2007. The completion rate—the percentage of children completing their primary schooling compared to the total number of children—increased from 30 percent in 2000 to 57 percent in 2006.

Madagascar received US$145 million from FTI’s Catalytic Fund for the period 2005-2011. Since the number of children attending school has steeply increased, the grants are used to train and hire new teachers, build schools, and improve the quality of education in general as part of the education sector plan.

The Malagasy government also invested in the recruitment of community teachers. Their number surged from 8,300 in 2003 to 28,840 in 2006-2007. Consequently, the student-teacher ratio decreased from 60 to 52, with the government planning to further decrease it to 40 over the next few years. Critics, however, point out that the qualifications of teachers were lowered, negatively affecting the quality of education.

Despite several measures to improve the quality of learning, the repetition rate remains high. “Compared to 30 percent in 2003, the current 19 percent rate of class repetition is a good result, but it is still a high number,” says Harimanana Rakotoarisoa, director at the Malagasy Ministry of Education.

To counter class repetition, the ministry is developing a comprehensive in-service teacher training system to improve the qualifications of teachers. Repetition, however, can also be the result of external factors, such as malnutrition and the precarious health situation of many children.

One measure to improve learning is changing the language of instruction from French to Malagasy. At the same time, the basic education cycle has been extended from five to seven years, which will allow children to enjoy free education for two more years.
GHANA:
No school fees and one free meal a day boost primary education

Torsavi Tetee, 71, is a traditional priest with a large family. None of his 12 children had ever set foot into a classroom because of a tradition he inherited from his ancestors. “Our parents were highly suspicious of Western education, which is seen as a means to deprive us of our culture and tradition, so they refused to send us to school,” he says.

Several decades later, things have changed drastically. Five of Torsavi’s grandchildren, are enrolled in a public primary school. They are benefiting from the government’s Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) program, which abolished school fees and introduced a National School Feeding Program to help achieve 100 percent basic education enrollment by 2015.

“I am extremely happy that my daughters have the opportunity to attend school. I do not worry about school fees. One day, we will have scholars in our family,” Amelevi Tetee says of her two daughters, who are the first generation of Torsavi’s grandchildren to attend school.

With the implementation of FCUBE, a lack of finances should not prevent parents from sending their children to school. A daily free meal should also draw students to schools.
Under the program, net enrollment rates for boys in primary school increased from 60 percent in 2004-2005 to 84 percent in 2007-2008, while enrollment of girls increased from 58 percent in 2004-2005 to 82 percent in 2007-2008.

“There has been a strong and steady increase in enrollment in primary education in Ghana over the past few years as compared to other African countries,” says Peter de Vries of UNICEF in Ghana, an FTI lead donor agency.

Ghana was allocated a US$33 million grant from the FTI Catalytic Fund to support the country’s education sector for the period 2005-2009.

Pre-2004 data show that enrollment in grade 1 did not exceed a 2 percent increase per year. As a result, the primary gross intake ratio (GIR) remained about 85 percent. After school fees were abolished and the School Feeding Program was implemented nationally, the numbers of children entering school for the first time started to rise rapidly. A capitation grant came into effect providing more funds to districts for basic education and giving more opportunities to communities to engage with local schools. Since 2004, when Ghana was endorsed by FTI, the GIR increased by 26 percent to reach 107 percent in 2006. The primary gross enrollment ratio increased from 75 percent in 1999 to 98 percent in 2007 and the dropout rate has been significantly reduced.

However, such high enrollment rates can have negative side effects, such as overcrowded classrooms and overwhelmed teachers, which affect the quality of teaching. The FTI Catalytic Fund grants have been mainly used to help ease the pressures on school facilities by providing classrooms and textbooks and to help schools attract qualified teachers by providing better accommodations for them.

The government of Ghana is determined to achieve the EFA goals by 2015. School feeding is one means to attract children to school. “In the beginning of 2008, we were feeding about 478,000 children under our program and we believe we covered about 595,000 children nationwide by the end of 2008. A daily meal in the classroom costs 40 pesewas (about 40 US cents),” says Michael Nsowah, director of the National School Feeding Program.

“I like to come to school to eat, learn, and play,” says Princess Owusu, an enthusiastic grade 2 student at the Taifa Catholic School in the Greater Accra region, shortly after she and her friends receive boiled yam and kontomire (sauce made of green vegetables).

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_Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa_
MONGOLIA:
Schools brought to rural herder communities

Some 135 kilometers from Ulaanbaatar, a herder in the province of Töv rides with his son toward a ger—the white tent-like structure that is the traditional house for Mongolia’s nomadic people. He pulls the reins, and the horse stops. His son, age six, jumps off and, after a quick good-bye, runs with a big smile to the preschool.

Scenes like this are becoming more common in Mongolia as ger schools offering basic education emerge in the countryside.

For many young children in rural Töv, herding activities and the nomadic lifestyle that comes with it can mean little opportunity for education. These mobile schools could change all that. Herding families in remote areas are provided with twogers: one to serve as a classroom, and the other as a kitchen. In the summer months, and only then, the ger school runs eight hours a day, changing locations after 45 days of teaching.

“Before, herders had no chance to send their children to preschool,” says B. Dorj, a herder and father of a ger schoolchild. “It will be helpful if these mobile schools extend their operating season for two or three more months. And if

— Robert Zoellick, President of the World Bank

Photo: Asian Development Bank (Mongolia)
they are supplied with electricity and more materials, it will be wonderful for the children, who deserve nothing less than those who go to the city schools.”

Preschool education through ger kindergartens was first introduced in 1995 by Save the Children. The initiative turned out to be a success and was taken up by other donors, including UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank.

Early childhood development through the ger kindergartens is an important intervention, because until September 2008, primary education in Mongolia started only at the age of seven. Early childhood development can improve the learning outcomes later on, as shown by many studies. The early childhood years are a time of remarkable brain development that lays the foundation for later learning. According to the Ministry of Education, 57 percent of the country’s six-year-olds were enrolled in a kindergarten in 2007 and 13 percent of them attended a ger school.

A grant from FTI’s Catalytic Fund, totaling US$29.4 million for 2007-2009, is supporting basic education in Mongolia’s remote areas. The CF grant, among others is contributing to the financing of 100 ger schools spread over 21 provinces. Funding is also being used to improve the quality of education, obtain better school equipment, and extend the primary school cycle by an additional year. 6,000 new mathematics and technical education teachers, English-language teachers, and primary school teachers have been trained.

“The main goal of the education sector program in this country is an increase in early childhood education and a reduction in dropout numbers. Both goals will have important consequences for Mongolia’s future,” says Arshad Sayed, the World Bank country manager in Mongolia.

Sayed noted that local communities have concerns about the sustainability of the program. One concern is location, because the ger schools need to be in the right spot for the maximum benefit to all children. Another concern is the availability of teachers, who must work several months in remote areas. A third issue is heating costs if the ger schools operate outside the summer period.

“The FTI program is being implemented successfully,” says Adrian Ruthenberg, country director for the Asian Development Bank in Mongolia and co-chair of the local partners working under the FTI umbrella. He feels that the coordination of aid from different organizations has been an important success. “A major achievement of the local FTI partners is that they enhanced aid effectiveness by working collectively on the challenges the education sector is facing.”

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Achieving the right to basic education for all is one of the biggest moral challenges of our times.

— Koïchiro Matsuura, Director General of UNESCO
YEMEN: Leaving no girls behind

*Najiba Ali is 13-years old, in grade 6 and is excited about going to her new school. “I have a dream,” she says. “I love to come to school to become a teacher.”*

With a faded black garment and headscarf, her eyes reveal fear that she may not be able to achieve her dream.

The school does not have enough classrooms. Although her parents have been supportive, they will not allow her to move to another bigger but mixed-gender school.

Like many girls of the Mat’ae village of Hodeidah province in the Republic of Yemen, Najiba has plenty of daily household duties. Nonetheless, Najiba—who is passionate about education—wants all the local girls to go to school. So far many of them do not attend.

Najiba’s school, the Nusaibah Primary School for Girls, hosts 262 pupils, coming primarily from very poor families. The three-classroom school is funded by FTI’s Catalytic Fund among other funds. Before the construction of the school, children attended classes under trees or in small huts made of fronds.

Although many children under the age of 15 are still not in school, Yemen has made much progress over the past years. At the national level, between 2000 and 2006, the grade 1 intake ratio increased from 76 percent to 112 percent and the primary gross enrollment ratio rose from 70 percent to 86 percent. The girls’ enrollment rate increased from 59 percent in 2000 to 75 percent in 2006, while the primary completion rate for girls grew from 37 percent to 48 percent in the same period.
In some rural areas, only 30 percent of girls, on average, are enrolled in school, and half of these girls drop out before reaching grade 6.

Education represents 17 percent of the national budget. However, investments remain insufficient to achieve steady progress toward Education for All by 2015.

Several other challenges hinder government efforts to accelerate girls’ education. Most parents cannot afford school fees. Others do not want to have their girls study along with boys or do not want them to be taught by male teachers. A third category of parents does not believe that education is essential for girls. When such parents choose to educate their children, they usually do not consider girls.

The government of Yemen recognizes these issues. In 2003, the Education Sector Plan—with a special focus on girls’ education—was endorsed by the FTI partners, and the country was granted US$40 million over the period 2004–2007 from the Catalytic Fund.

The FTI grants were used to expand and improve education in under served areas in four provinces: Al-Baidha, Dhamar, Hajjah, and Hodeidah. Existing school infrastructure was rehabilitated while 214 new girl-friendly schools were built with proper toilet facilities. The schools have trained female teachers, which boosted girls’ enrollment and retention rates significantly. School kits were provided to 350,000 children.

Enrollment in grades 1 to 6 in the target provinces increased by 23 percent between 2006-2008. The newly enrolled female students outnumber the boys.

Many factors contribute to such high enrollment by girls, acknowledges Maaike van Vliet, first secretary at the Embassy of the Netherlands in Yemen. Nonetheless, she believes one factor is vital: “The success of attracting and keeping girls in Yemen in schools is the female teacher.”

FTI helped increase the number of female teachers by funding a teacher training institute in the rural province of Shabwah. Approximately 1,000 female teachers will be hired over the coming years.

Najiba, who always sits in the front row of the class so that she can closely follow the instructions on the blackboard, hopes to be one of them some day. “I want to teach all children how to read and write,” she explains. “Many boys can read and girls cannot. There should not be a difference.”

When you put a girl through school, you can really change the course of a nation. It is a double dividend.

— Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan
GUYANA:
Last ones in school—Guyana’s indigenous children

Scattered across the densely forested interior region are the sparsely populated villages of the indigenous people of Guyana. Many of their children travel long distances on foot or by canoe to attend school without eating a proper breakfast and without a packed lunch.

The government of Guyana, assisted by donor organizations, has made progress toward making quality education more accessible to its indigenous peoples. Traditionally, they have been offered poorer education services than that available to the majority of the population living on the coastal strip along the Atlantic Ocean.

With a total allocation of US$12 million from FTI’s Catalytic Fund (for 2004–2008) and a new grant of US$20 million (for 2009–2012), the government, in collaboration with donor organizations, is working hard to improve the quality of education, and to get these hard-to-reach children in the classroom to complete their schooling.

A special effort is made to hire qualified teachers to serve the sparsely populated interior regions. Thanks to donor financing, programs at teacher training colleges are expanded and the number of graduated teachers went up considerably. With support of subsidized housing for teaching staff, knowledge resource centers for teachers and a bonus, more teachers are willing to work in the interior.

Other policy measures focused on improving school facilities and providing learning materials for all schoolchildren. The provision of school meals helped boost primary school attendance.
Also, thanks to Catalytic Fund grants, more than a million textbooks were purchased for the 442 primary schools in Guyana. Instead of having to share textbooks, students now have their own individual copies.

As a result, more indigenous children are completing their primary education. The primary completion rate in the hinterland regions went up from 72 percent in 2001-2002 to 95 percent in 2006-2007.

Bernadette Williams, the head teacher of Holy Name Primary School in Guyana’s District 7, sees an increase in students’ academic results as well: “Children have greatly improved in grade 6 from previous years, when most of them had just over 200 marks out of a total of 560. But this year, the least marks obtained were 320,” she said.

Teachers, officials of the Ministry of Education, and community leaders, however, agree that the most significant contribution to the higher completion rate is the School Feeding Program.

When asked what she considers to be FTI’s most outstanding contribution, District 7 school teacher Theresa Brathwaite says: “It is the school feeding program because if the children are hungry, the textbooks, furniture, fancy fence and anything else will be useless. School feeding has affected the children’s attitude. They are less depressed. They seem happier and are trying...Before the feeding program began, the children living along the river remained at home if they didn’t have their lunches.”

One far-reaching contribution of the FTI program in Guyana is the capacity that is being built at the grassroots level to manage community development projects. The volunteers of the management committee for the School Feeding Program are community members and parents living in the same villages. They are trained in financial management to spend and account for the millions of Guyanese dollars that are used to provide school meals every day. Other members are trained in food preparation and nutrition-related matters, thereby creating a heightened awareness in diet and health issues. These are new skills to most members of the communities in remote areas.

*Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development.*

— Kofi Annan, Former Secretary General of the United Nations
The Way Forward:  
_The Hope That Every Child Is Educated, Everywhere_

Many low-income countries are honoring their commitments by increasing domestic resources in education and making difficult political decisions to reform their education sectors. Some of them dedicate 20 percent of their national budget to education, reaching the FTI benchmark for desired government expenditure on education. These countries need predictable and sustainable external financing to execute their multiannual plans to hire teachers, train them, build classrooms, provide textbooks, and ultimately guarantee the quality of education in the most efficient manner.

Donors need to do their part. UNESCO estimates US$11 billion per year in aid will be needed to help low-income countries achieve basic education for all children; currently, only a third of that amount is provided.

The current FTI countries face a financing gap of about US$1 billion annually for their national education strategies. Many developing countries, most notably in Africa, have expressed interest in joining FTI. International partners should embrace this call for FTI expansion as countries show their commitment to make serious and long-term investments in their national education systems.
Aid for the education sector should be implemented in the most effective manner. Following the FTI principles of alignment with a country’s education sector plan will benefit aid effectiveness. FTI partners will need to collaborate even more intensively to create an environment leading to more harmonized and efficient aid delivery, for example, by making greater use of developing countries’ own systems.

Improving access for all children is a necessary but not a sufficient step toward achieving education goals. However, increasing the quality of education that all children receive once they are in school is even more important. Therefore, countries must develop and implement strategies to improve learning, not just for the millions of out-of-school children, but also for the hundreds of millions of children in school who are not receiving a good quality education.

Every child should enjoy a high quality education—including children in remote areas, children with disabilities, children living in post conflict situations, and children affected by HIV/AIDS or other diseases. FTI recognizes the pressing need to ensure access to education for all vulnerable groups and commits itself to prompt action.

Achieving universal primary education before 2015 is an attainable Millennium Development Goal. But the time is running out and this requires that more and more predictable funding is provided now.

Every child can learn. Every child can grow up to contribute to his or her family, community, and country. But today, not every child has that chance.

—Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State of the United States.

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