

Education for all

Fast track or slow trickle?

Finance and Development Ministers meet in Washington later this week at a time when the international community seems more divided than ever. The Spring Meetings provide an opportunity to bring the world together behind an unstoppable drive to educate all the world's children. Currently 115 million children are out of school. Last year the international community agreed a Fast Track initiative to tackle this crisis. The response from many developing countries has been impressive. It is now time for rich countries to deliver and stop the Fast Track from becoming a slow trickle.

Summary

Finance and Development Ministers meet in Washington later this week at a time when the international community seems more divided than ever. The Spring Meetings therefore take on a new significance. They provide a vital opportunity for the world to come together behind a common effort to tackle poverty across the globe. There could be no more powerful symbol of reconciliation and hope in the world than a united effort to tackle the global education crisis and provide a basic education for all the world's children.

The picture is bleak:

- 115 million children across the world do not attend school
- There are 860 million illiterate adults in the world, two thirds of them are women
- 40% of children in Africa receive no education.

But a solution to this education crisis is within reach. At the Spring Meetings in 2002 Ministers launched the Education For All (EFA) Fast Track initiative, and promised to provide increased and better coordinated aid to countries that produce a credible strategy to educate all their children and have the political will to implement it.

The Fast Track initiative (FTI) has generated new incentives that are galvanizing action at the national level. An ever-growing number of developing countries are prioritising basic education, developing credible plans, and increasing their own investment in the sector.

This paper incorporates recent research by Oxfam and our partners from the Global Campaign for Education. The paper highlights the impressive steps being taken to address the overwhelming popular demand for basic education by governments in a number of developing countries:

- In **Niger** there are 1.3 million children out of school. The Government has managed to increase enrolment by 10% over 5 years. Donors are coordinating their efforts behind the government's Fast Track strategy, but they have so far failed to deliver adequate financing
- **Mozambique** has raised enrolment rates to 99.3% from a low of 55.9% when civil war ended in 1992. Mozambique is losing 1000 teachers a year to HIV/AIDS, and has included an HIV/AIDS action plan in its Fast Track strategy which has been endorsed by donors but is not yet financed
- **Tanzania** made basic education free and 1.6m additional children turned up for school. Now the government is struggling to improve quality and make the most of this wonderful new dawn for the country's children
- During the 2002 elections the people of **Kenya** demanded free and universal education. Now they have their wish, but Kenya urgently needs support.

Sadly the response from rich countries has so far been desperately inadequate. The first seven countries to qualify for FTI need only \$430 million over 3 years (less than half the cost of a stealth bomber) to implement their plans and get 3.9 million children into school. Rich countries have so far found less than half of this, much of it repackaged from existing promises. There is a strong risk that some countries will continue to be ignored because they are of no strategic interest to rich countries.

Donors seem to prefer the 'slow trickle' approach to the 'fast track' approach. This threatens to undermine the positive incentives for reform that have been created in Fast Track countries and in those countries that are not currently part of the initiative but are making every effort to be considered for FTI status.

The G7 countries are currently committing just US\$639 million a year to basic education, a tiny amount compared to the estimated US\$10 billion to US\$14 billion needed to deliver universal primary education.

The Spring Meetings provide an opportunity to turn this situation around and launch an unstoppable drive to educate all the world's children.

Recommendations

At the Spring Meetings rich country Finance and Development Ministers should:

- **Provide a rock solid commitment that the 10 countries that have already qualified for the Fast Track initiative will receive all the financial assistance they need to meet the goal of universal primary education by 2015. Individual donors should make specific announcements of the exact amount of financing they will provide for each of these countries over the next 3 years**
- **Provide a detailed timetable for the expansion of the Fast Track initiative to include other countries that on current trends will fail to meet the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015, and whose governments demonstrate that they are seriously committed to meeting the goal**
- **Agree a strategy to guarantee that as many girls as boys start primary school in 2005**
- **Agree to finance recurrent costs such as teachers salaries**
- **Agree to pursue new ways of ensuring that 'non-favourite' countries receive the financing they need**
- **Commit to work actively to improve donor coordination at the national level.**

The Global Education Crisis

115 million children¹ across the world are not enrolled in school. Many more than that drop out before being able to read or do simple mathematics. They will join the ranks of 860 million illiterate adults in the world. If current trends continue 70 countries will definitely miss the goal of universal primary completion by 2015, and there is no data for an additional 16 countries².

Girls and women are the biggest victims of this education crisis. Two thirds of the children who drop out of school before completing their primary education are girls³. Two thirds of illiterate adults are women.

These challenges make meeting the Millennium Development Goal of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 an all but impossible prospect. This continuing global discrimination against girls' and women's education is a towering barrier against international efforts to eliminate poverty, improve health, and strengthen democracy. Investments in girls' education reap a major development dividend. The children of women who have completed primary education are on average twice as likely to survive beyond the age of five, and half as likely to suffer from malnutrition⁴. Mothers who have completed primary education are 50% more likely to immunize their infants. If the world's girls are not educated, the world will not meet any of the Millennium Development Goals.

Box 1. Pounding millet day after day: Adiatou Issaka's story

Adiatou Issaka lives just 500 meters from Farekaina primary school in rural Niger, but she does not go there. The school is full. There is only one classroom built from straw and one teacher for 59 children. Adiatou is 12 years old, and she has never been taught to read or write. Neither of her two older brothers went to school, but her younger brother enrolled two years ago. In the morning, when her brother walks the short distance to school, Adiatou is already hard at work. She spends most of her time, about 6 hours a day, pounding millet.

"Sometimes the work is very very hard because often I don't have water. Pounding millet is really hard. You need a lot of strength."

Adiatou carries out numerous other tasks. She sweeps the mud hut and compound where the family lives, she goes to the well for water, she fetches firewood, and collects gandafoye leaves which are used to make the sauce the family eats with their meals. Sometimes she sells kopto leaves (a kind of cabbage) that her older brothers bring from Dosso. She can make up to 300 francs a day (about US 45 cents).

Adiatou says she feels sad when her brother goes to school in the morning. They are close friends, and he has taught her a few words of French.

“Sometimes my little brother asks me to go to school with him but I have to say no. My brother wants to be a teacher so he can share knowledge with everyone. I want to learn to read and write too.”

Adiatou thinks her mother and father would allow her to go to the school if there was space. But she wonders who would pound the millet.

“It would be easy if the village had a mill”.

Africa is the epicentre of the global education crisis. Forty per cent of children in Africa receive no education. Those who do go to school receive an average of only 3.5 years of learning. In Mali, Mozambique, and Ethiopia the average is less than one year in school. During the 1990s the numbers of children enrolling at primary school fell in 17 African countries. If current trends continue, Africa will account for two-thirds of children missing out on school by 2015. Tackling the education crisis in Africa is made much harder by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In Zambia, more teachers will die of AIDS this year than pass through teacher training. The cruel irony is that at present a basic education is the only vaccine the world has for the HIV virus.

The transition economies of Central Asia and parts of Eastern Europe are a new education crisis zone. In states such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan once solid education systems are crumbling because of economic decline and under investment. Communities face the prospect of losing a generation to illiteracy as development goes into reverse.

In developing countries the education crisis is also a crisis of educational quality. Those children who do attend school in the world's poor countries face enormous obstacles to their learning. It is not unusual for children to walk several hours to go to school and to be sent to school with an empty stomach. A chronic lack of trained teachers in many countries means that class sizes are huge and that children are often taught in shifts or in multi-grade classes. Across Africa, schools have an inadequate supply of basic materials. Books, desks, and benches are in short supply. As box 2 below illustrates, school buildings are nothing like those in rich countries.

Box 2. Dust, snakes, rain and fire...the challenges of teaching in a school made of straw

Farekaina state school serves a rural community 7km from the town of Dosso in Niger. Only one third of the children of primary school age in Farekaina go to the school because there is only one classroom and it is packed with 59 children. No children have been admitted for the past two years. The teacher at the school, Zainabou Moussa, describes the conditions that make it so hard for the children to learn:

“The classroom is awful. When dust sweeps in we have to stop the lesson. In the cold season the children are shivering. Snakes sometimes come into the classroom and the children flee.”

Supplies of equipment and teaching materials are inadequate:

“The children sit on sacks on the dirt floor,” Zainabou says “they need tables and desks. It takes them ages just to write things because they have no desks. There is only one book for every five children. There is no latrine”.

Even in the capital of Niger, Niamey, it is common to find classrooms made from straw. Nordire state school is in the southern part of the capital. Four of the school's nine classrooms are made from straw. In October two classrooms were destroyed by fire, and for nearly three months the children took lessons sitting outside in the dust under the burning sun while the community raised the money to rebuild the classrooms themselves. In a few months they will have to be rebuilt again. The headmaster, Amadou Soumana, explains why:

“When it rains the straw classrooms are ruined and we have to rebuild them. So much time is lost for the children in these straw classrooms.”

The most frustrating aspect of the global education crisis is that its solution is known. Getting the majority of the 115 million children who are out of school into school is a perfectly realistic and achievable task for the international community at the beginning of the 21st century. Developing country governments need to find the political will to deliver education for all. They need to plan effectively, strengthen capacity, channel resources to the school level, hire and train teachers, make curricula relevant, provide books and equipment, build classrooms, and reach out to groups that the school system doesn't serve effectively- especially girls. Rich countries must live up to their repeated promise that “no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources”.⁵

The EFA Fast Track initiative

At the World Bank and IMF Spring Meetings in 2002, a new partnership was launched between rich countries and poor countries to tackle the education crisis and make sure the world meets the Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015. The EFA Fast Track initiative (FTI) aims to provide increased and better coordinated donor support to countries that have a credible strategy for achieving education for all (firmly rooted in wider national poverty reduction strategies) and the political will to implement it.

Rich countries have made a promise to developing countries that if they launch a credible strategy to achieve EFA and if they increase their own domestic resource mobilization, any financing gap that remains will be met by the international community.

In June 2002 18 countries were invited to submit proposals to the Fast Track secretariat under the new initiative. The invitation to participate in the FTI has had a significant impact. New incentives have been created which are galvanizing action at the national level. An ever-growing number of developing countries are making education for all a major priority.

The first countries to qualify for Fast Track

In November 2002, at the first EFA Donor Consortium meeting in Brussels, 7 countries (Burkina Faso, Niger (see box 3), Mauritania, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guinea, and Guyana) submitted national Fast Track strategies that were judged by donors at the national and global level as being credible strategies that provide a sound basis around which to coordinate significant increases in aid for basic education as part of FTI.

These countries have already begun implementing significant policy changes. They are committing themselves to substantial increases in their own spending on education as well as difficult and ambitious system reforms. But these reforms are costly and can be politically difficult. They cannot happen without additional resources.

Box 3. Niger: A reformer in need of champions

Niger is the poorest peaceful country in the world. It ranks second to last on the Human Development Index. 1.3 million children of primary school age are out of school in Niger. This is an astonishing figure given that the country's overall population is just 11 million. The government is strongly committed to changing this. Over the past five years it has managed to increase enrolment rates by nearly 10 percentage points. But Niger has far too few resources to complete the task. Last June, Niger responded enthusiastically to its invitation to participate in the Fast Track initiative and prepared a comprehensive education reform plan. Key features of the plan include:

- Making education relevant to the daily lives of Niger's children, and introducing life skills and HIV-AIDS into the curriculum
- Recruiting 9000 new teachers and building or upgrading 25,000 classrooms
- Specific interventions to reach girls, the disabled, and nomadic groups

- Decentralizing the education system and involving communities in managing schools
- A significant increase in Niger's own spending on education (including setting aside 40% of debt relief funds for education).

Donor representatives in the country have praised the Fast Track plan as bold but realistic. All donors have committed to deliver their future aid to the education sector in a way that directly supports Niger's Fast Track strategy. This will reduce competition amongst donors in certain areas, enhance their joint capacity to monitor resource use, and free up capacity in the Ministry by replacing multiple reporting procedures with a single report against a shared set of targets that goes to the entire donor community.

Fast Track support is vital to Niger's education reform effort precisely because Niger has been chronically neglected by the donor community. Niger has few donors, and even for most of those donors that are represented in the country, Niger is not a priority.

Existing resources already committed for basic education for the period 2003-2005 are 73,453 million CFA (US\$120 million) from the government of Niger and 31,725 million CFA (US\$52 million) from the international community. In order to move ahead on implementing its plans for education reform and expansion, Niger needs an additional 41,730 million CFA (US\$67 million). But although the donor consortium meetings in November 2002 and March 2003 promised to find these additional funds, there is still little clarity about which donors will provide how much financing and when. The French and Belgian Governments may provide some further funding, but a gap seems likely to remain, condemning hundreds of thousands of children to a life of illiteracy and poverty.

A total of just \$430 million is needed over three years for the first seven countries on the basis of proposals received. Rich countries have so far failed to come up with even half of this amount and much of the money that has been pledged is simply repackaged from existing promises. At the second EFA Donor Consortium in March 2003 in Paris, donors reconfirmed their commitment to address the financing needs of these seven countries, but few specifics emerged as to how this will be achieved. In addition, three new countries, Mozambique (see box 4), Gambia, and Yemen submitted national Fast Track strategies that were judged by donors at the national and global level as being credible strategies that provide a sound basis around which to coordinate significant increases in aid for basic education as part of FTI. Donors have agreed to identify additional financing for these 3 countries in time for the third EFA Donor Consortium Meeting to be held in November 2003. This meeting will be jointly chaired by the French and Norwegian governments.

Box 4. Mozambique: teachers and children on the frontline again⁶

Mozambique ranks as the sixth lowest country on the UNDP Human Development Index. Despite this, by 1981 it had achieved nearly 100% primary enrolment and equally impressive improvements in health and literacy indicators. Then, a 16-year civil war obliterated Mozambique's hard-won gains. Anti-government rebels, supplied with funds and weapons by apartheid South Africa, deliberately targeted schools, clinics and their skilled personnel as symbols of state-led development. More than 3000 schools were destroyed, along with most of the country's economic infrastructure. Tragically, a further 500 primary schools were lost in the devastating floods of 2000-2001.

Since the war ended in 1992, the Government and civil society have made remarkable efforts to rebuild the country. Thousands of classrooms have been constructed, and enrolments have climbed steadily back upwards. Significant progress has been made towards increasing access to primary education, with gross enrolment in primary school rising from just 55.9% in 1992 to 99.3% in 2002. Huge challenges remain. 1.23 million children are still out of school and two thirds of students drop out of school before completing even 5 years of learning. 71% of women in Mozambique cannot read. Quality of education remains a serious problem, and only a third of teachers have professional training.

Now Mozambique is facing another war – the war against HIV-AIDS. In 2001 alone, an estimated 52,000 children were born HIV positive; nearly half of the 600 new infections per day are among adolescents and young people. The Government estimates that an average of 1000 teachers will die of AIDS each year for the next three years.

Mozambique's Fast Track proposal was endorsed by donors in March 2003. The Fast Track proposal includes an action plan to address gender disparity in education and an action plan for HIV/AIDS. The conditions are ripe for a major expansion and improvement in access and quality of education, and the Government will increase its own spending on basic education to 20% of the overall budget. A commitment to decentralization and the involvement of provincial and district authorities in implementation will help increase the capacity of the education system to absorb new funds. Improvements in donor coordination would also greatly help. Since 1999, the ministry of education has been trying to persuade donors to integrate funding arrangements, so that all external financing goes through a single channel. This would free an understaffed Ministry to concentrate on running schools, rather than filling in donor paperwork.

The Fast Track process could deliver the additional and better-coordinated education funding that Mozambique so urgently needs, if its painstaking rise from the ashes of war and destitution is to continue. But a financing gap of on average \$65 million per year remains over the next three years.

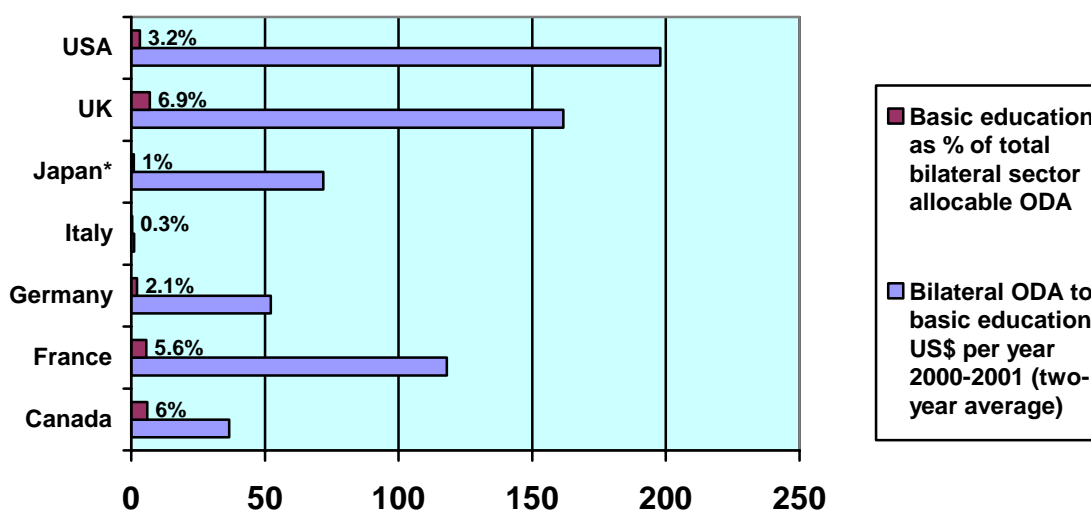
Rich countries failing to live up to their promises

Rich countries have so far failed to live up to their promises to the world's children. The painfully slow progress made towards financing the education strategies of the first seven countries to qualify for Fast Track support sends a negative message to developing country governments. Rich countries face a reputational risk if they continue to respond so slowly to the efforts made by developing countries within FTI. Continuing to take this slow track approach will also undermine the positive incentives for reform that have been created in Fast Track countries and in those countries that are not currently part of the initiative but are making every effort to be considered for the FTI status.

Existing aid flows to basic education are grossly inadequate given the scale of the challenge facing the world's poorest countries. Between US\$10 and US\$14 billion⁷ in additional aid will be required to enable the world to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of Universal Primary Education by 2015. Yet between them, the world's richest countries are currently committing just \$639 million a year to basic education – or just 3 cents in every dollar of aid.

Table 1: G7 aid for basic education

(source: CRS and DAC statistics)



*Data for Japan excludes technical co-operation

The Financing for Development Summit in Monterrey promised to reverse declining aid levels by targeting resources strategically at achieving the MDGs. In June, G7 leaders pledged to ‘significantly increase the support provided by our bilateral aid agencies to basic education’⁸ and ‘strongly endorsed the action plan presented by the Bank as a basis for reaching international consensus to help make primary education a reality for all children by 2015’.

Several G7 countries have announced new initiatives in the education sector that should lead to an increase in overall aid flows for education:

- UK has announced US\$2 billion in aid for basic education over the next 5 years
- Germany has committed to doubling aid for basic education over 5 years (although starting from a very low base of US\$52.2 million)
- In June 2002 President Bush announced a very small new initiative to deliver US\$20 million a year to basic education over the next 5 years. Funding of US programs for basic education is projected to reach US\$250 million in 2003. The Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) will hopefully deliver significantly more resources for basic education. One concern is that the MCA will do little for Africa, the epicentre of the education crisis
- Japan has committed to spending US\$2 billion on aid for overall education over 5 years. The BEGIN initiative for basic education was also announced. It is not clear how much of this is new money and how much will be for basic education
- Canada has committed to quadruple aid for basic education over the period 2000 to 2005 (starting from a very low level, with an average of just US\$36.6m per year in 2000 and 2001)
- The reallocation of unspent EU funds could free up significant additional funds for basic education.

So far these announcements remain just rhetorical commitments, with no additional money being delivered on the ground. Even if all these commitments are delivered they represent a small fraction of the US\$10 to US\$14 billion⁹ in additional aid that will be needed to deliver universal primary education.

Rich countries must improve the quality as well as the quantity of their aid. In particular, they must coordinate their efforts at both the national and global levels. FTI has helped spur some improvements in donor coordination at the national level, but much more needs to be done. A recent study in Ghana found that in a single year the

Ministry of Education hosted 54 donor missions¹⁰. More effective donor coordination is needed to eliminate competition among donors, to allow donors to identify gaps in the overall package of support given to a country, and to cut down on the number of reports donors request from education ministries. Education ministries should provide a single report to donors against a shared set of targets to the whole donor community. The existence of shared reporting, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms should enhance the capacity of donors to monitor the effective use of resources and introduce more clarity into budget processes. The FTI's emphasis on the PRSP should also help push forward donor coordination.

There is also a need for greater donor coordination at the global level. Most donors tend to concentrate their aid on a limited number of countries. When these 'concentration countries' are selected by the donor according to need and the effectiveness of government, this targeting of countries would seem to have a strong logic. However, the lack of coordination among donors means that the sum of all donor preferences does not add up to a sensible distribution of aid among recipient countries. Instead aid globally is skewed in favor of certain countries, with other countries being almost completely deprived of aid flows. In the context of the FTI progress towards identifying financing for countries that have not traditionally received much donor support has been slow. A country like Niger which desperately needs additional aid and which has a government committed to poverty reduction is faced with the problem that no donor has made Niger a priority. When one adds to this equation the fact that much aid is still distributed to countries that are of economic, political or strategic importance to the donor country, the overall distribution of aid is extremely inefficient.

Another problem is the lack of predictability of flows of aid for basic education, and the unwillingness of donors to make commitments beyond the short term. Evidence of this is the failure of donors even to give details of the aid flows they will deliver over 3 years to the first 7 Fast Track countries to qualify for support. Developing countries need to be sure about the reliability of long-term donor financing commitments, especially for recurrent costs. Developing countries frequently protest that it would be risky for them to hire new teachers based on aid-financing unless there is reasonable assurance that the funds will be available over a significant number of years, providing time for countries to gradually assume responsibility for financing these expenditures. Again, the emphasis that the FTI makes on the PRSP assumes donors will provide more predictable support to countries, but in practice this is still not uniformly the case.

The most frequently repeated reason given by donors for their inadequate response to the Fast Track countries is that they are concerned about ‘absorptive capacity’. Clearly there are challenges that need to be overcome when rapidly increasing investment in the education sectors in poor countries. But these concerns have been grossly overstated. As a recent paper from the UK Government states¹¹ “there is good evidence that poor countries can readily absorb higher levels of aid. The World Bank has estimated that two thirds of the countries that are unlikely, on current trends, to achieve the MDGs already have in place appropriate policy and institutional environments, and on-going reforms, to allow an additional \$40 billion a year to be absorbed.”

If donors were serious about delivering education for all in the world’s poorest countries they would work closely with governments to boost capacity at the same time as investment is expanded. This is the approach that has been adopted in success stories like Uganda. Excessive donor bureaucracy and a lack of donor coordination are often the real cause of the limited ability of developing countries to absorb donor funds. In country after country aid is delayed and its effectiveness is reduced because recipient countries are stuck on a treadmill trying to fulfil the competing demands of poorly coordinated donors.

The burden of debt: blocking progress towards education for all

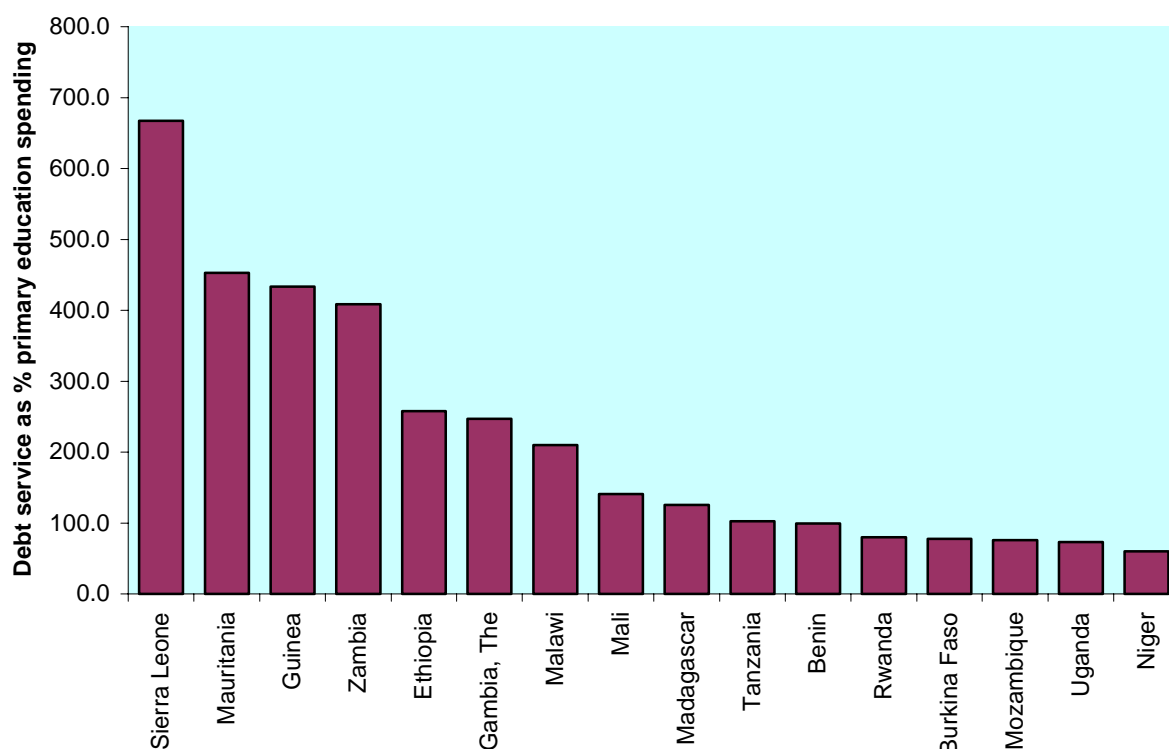
For many of the world’s poorest countries, the burden of debt is a huge barrier to progress towards education for all. 47 million of the world’s out-of-school children live in countries that are included in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC). If current trends continue, this figure will rise to 57 million by 2015.

For the 17 HIPC countries for which data is available, in 2001:

- 10 spent more on debt service than on primary education
- On average, all 17 countries spend just over twice as much on debt servicing as on primary education
- In Ethiopia, one of the poorest countries in the world, the net enrollment rate for primary education is 31%, and that for girls just 28%. A quarter of the children that do enroll drop out before grade 2 and an estimated three-quarters of the population of primary school age are out of school. Yet the country will spend approximately one third more on debt service than primary

education in 2002. Over 2002-2005 it will spend, on average, a quarter of the amount needed each year to achieve Universal Primary Education on debt servicing.

Table 2. Debt service as % of primary education spending (2001)¹²



Expanding the Fast Track initiative to more countries

The group of countries that can expect to benefit from FTI in the near future is far too narrow. Donors have taken too long to assess country proposals. The first 7 countries to fully qualify for fast track support were the smallest (and hence cheapest) of the 18 countries invited to participate in the initiative. These 7 countries represent just 3.9 million of the 115 million children in the world that are out of school. Progress towards the qualification of the remaining 11 countries has slowed to a trickle. Among these 11 countries are a number of countries with very large out of school populations. Countries like Tanzania (see box 4) and Ethiopia have large numbers of children out of school and they urgently need to qualify for

additional donor support. The FTI timetable agreed by Finance and Development Ministers in April 2002 envisaged a timetable for expansion starting in January 2003. This has been delayed and yet the momentum for expansion is critical to the success of the process overall.

Box. 4 Tanzania: children flooding back to school, international community failing to respond

When Godfrey Joseph started classes at his local primary school in central Tanzania in January 2002, his experience was a little unusual. It was the first time he'd ever set foot inside a classroom, and yet he was already thirteen – by any country's standards an advanced age for a child to learn to read and write.

But Godfrey's story was a common one last year in Tanzania. His school in the dusty town of Shinyanga saw an influx of hundreds of children when the government introduced free primary education. Until then, parents had to pay fees to send their children to school. Sometimes as little as \$5 per child per year, these fees nevertheless priced education out of the reach of the very poorest families.

Last year the floodgates opened. 1.6 million primary-aged children who had been excluded from school in Tanzania began, like Godfrey, eagerly devouring new skills and knowledge. His eight-room school is now crammed with almost two thousand pupils, a testimony to the deep pent-up thirst for education. With the January 2003 intake, the number of children attending school has increased still further.

But the challenges remain enormous. The number of new classrooms, teaching materials and teachers has not kept up with the enthusiasm for enrolment. Many children are being taught in hugely overcrowded classes and the quality of education on offer in most schools does not provide children with the skills, knowledge and values to break out of the cycle of poverty in which many households are trapped. Perhaps most worrying of all, there is still no systematic approach to education about HIV/AIDS.

A wonderful new dawn for Tanzania's children could be spoiled entirely unless there is enough money at school level not only to replace the fees that were once collected, but also to create all the many elements of a learning environment that is necessary for the provision of a decent quality of education. Already there is evidence of schools collecting money 'by the backdoor' to make good the continuing shortfall of resources. The cost of uniforms and books continues to prevent many parents from sending their children to school.

Recent research by the NGO Maarifa reveals that parents and children consider the provision of food in school to be an urgent priority. Hungry children cannot learn, and yet the poorest parents cannot afford to make the contributions necessary to ensure that children receive any food in the middle of the day.

Weak coordination among donors is holding back an effective response to these challenges. 17 donors and development partners provide support to the country's education sector. Progress towards a genuinely country-driven and country-owned sector-wide approach in which donors coordinate their support behind the government's plan has been slow. Although some

donors are moving in this direction, others continue to prefer to support their own pet projects and programs and require separate planning and reporting processes from the government. This undermines the capacity of an already cash-starved, heavily indebted and in some areas capacity-challenged government to provide leadership in the drive towards education for all. The perception from the government's side is that donors are perpetually moving the goal posts.

One thing is certain; there remains a large funding gap at the national level, especially for recurrent costs. DFID, the lead donor in the education sector for Tanzania, estimates a financing gap of around \$100m per year. Donors have so far failed to take advantage of the tremendous new opportunity that the Government's Education For All policy provides. In particular, donors have not made it clear to the government what Tanzania needs to do to qualify for Fast Track funding and what support the country can expect to receive if they do qualify.

Tanzania's children can wait no longer. The international community must immediately coordinate their efforts behind Tanzania's education plan and fill the education financing gap for the country.¹³

Another issue that needs to be resolved is the role FTI will play in a second group of countries, the 5 countries with the largest out of school populations (Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh). These 5 countries have been slated for a parallel process called the Analytical and Technical Fast Track (AFT). They are home to 57% of the children in the world who do not go to school. The challenges that each of these countries face in delivering universal primary education are very different, but clearly the world will not achieve education for all unless there is a strong focus on these countries. We welcome the recent creation of a working group to look at the technical issues facing these larger countries, but recommend that the group clarify immediately the kind of support that these countries can expect to receive for their efforts to achieve education for all. The conditions exist for India to make rapid progress towards education for all. The OECD estimates scaling up of India's education system by one third would bring about universal primary education at a cost of 1% of GDP. Doubling aid could meet a third of this cost, and could be readily absorbed into current systems.¹⁴

A third group of countries are those that have not yet been invited to participate in the FTI but are preparing credible education plans and in some cases are seeking admission into FTI. The first wave of FTI countries is inspiring emulators ready to muster the political will to adopt sustainable education policies. Countries like Senegal, Kenya (see box 5), Rwanda, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan should be invited to participate in the Fast Track initiative as soon as possible, and the door must be left open for any other country that demonstrates the political will to achieve education for all. There is confusion as to which of the FTI qualifying criteria are fixed or flexible. This is

critical not just to planning by existing FTI countries, but also to the rate of FTI expansion. Donors need to be clear on what criteria they are judging countries that wish to join the FTI process.

Box 5. A new hope for Kenya's children

On October 25, 2001 over 500 people marched from Kibera, the slums on the edge of Nairobi, to the Ministry of Education. They called on the ministry to recognize the terrible poverty in Kibera and to grant free primary education to all children in Kenya. In January 2003, the people of Kibera found their wish had come true: the new President of Kenya, Mwai Kibaki, declared free primary education for all children. But this was only the start of a new chapter in the struggle to ensure all children in Kenya have access to education.

Kenya has a primary school age population of 9 million children, of these 1.5 million are out of school. The government has estimated Kenya needs huge additional investments (such as an additional 31,100 primary school teachers) to get all primary school age children into school. The government estimates the cost of providing free primary school education as 9 billion Kenyan shillings (US\$118 million). UNICEF has also launched a donor appeal to raise an additional \$4.5 million to increase support to the Kenyan school system and to help ensure that all children have an opportunity to go to school. The government has already written a PRSP (2001) and a National Education Plan (2002). It has been assessed by the World Bank in an education sector review (2002) and has just completed its own task force report on the implementation of free primary school education. Yet it has not yet qualified for the Education Fast Track Initiative.

You only need to go into the slums of Kibera to see the appalling conditions of children in Kenya, and the desperate need to additional assistance for the community. Catherine is ten years old and lives with her three sisters and her parents in a room three meters square in Kibera. Her father is a builder, relying on contract work, and her mother sells vegetables. Two years ago Catherine gave up school so there was enough money to pay for her older sister to attend, so now Catherine is two years behind. She has recently started attending a community school, walking a muddy path to school (a 30 minute journey). The family cannot afford to give her any food until the evening, only a cup of strong black tea at breakfast.

Despite the declaration to provide free primary education, almost a third of Kenya's children are out of school. And for those children, like Catherine, who do have a school to go to, they and their families still face expensive demands to buy schoolbooks and uniforms. The Kenyan government's task force on free primary education, has called on donors to provide: financial support, equipment and teaching and learning materials, physical facilities, professional and technical support, school feeding, and capacity building. It's a long list, but children like Catherine deserve the chance to not only go to school, but to stay in school – and achieving that will take a lot more donor support.

Finally, countries with weaker policy environments must not be ignored. Donors should support and accelerate interim strategies aimed at meeting immediate educational needs, and getting countries 'on track' to achieve education for all, while simultaneously helping to develop long-term capacity to produce and implement national plans of action. At each stage of this 'escalator approach' countries should be assured of the additional donor resources they need in order to strengthen institutions, skills and systems, while continuing to improve and expand the delivery of basic education.

Recommendations

At the Spring Meetings rich country Finance and Development Ministers should:

- **Provide a rock solid commitment that the 10 countries that have already qualified for the Fast Track initiative will receive all the financial assistance they need to meet the goal of universal primary education by 2015. Individual donors should make specific announcements of the exact amount of financing they will provide for each of these countries over the next 3 years**
- **Provide a detailed timetable for the expansion of the Fast Track initiative to include other countries that on current trends will fail to meet the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015, and whose governments demonstrate that they are seriously committed to meeting the goal.**
- **Agree a strategy to guarantee that as many girls as boys start primary school in 2005**
- **Agree to finance recurrent costs such as teachers salaries**
- **Agree to pursue new ways of ensuring that 'non-favourite' countries receive the financing they need**
- **Commit to work actively to improve donor coordination at the national level.**

Appendix 1

Status of Countries within Fast Track initiative

18 countries invited in June 2002 to develop credible education plans under fast track	5 countries identified in June 2002 as requiring an urgent focus under a parallel analytical fast track because of large out of school population	7 (of the 18) countries produced credible plans and qualified in November 2002 for additional donor financing	3 more (of the 18) produced credible plans and qualified in March 2003 for additional donor financing	8 remain (of the 18) scheduled to produce plans by November 2003	Several other countries are preparing credible education plans and should be rapidly included in the Fast Track initiative
Albania Bolivia Burkina Ethiopia Gambia Ghana Guinea Guyana Honduras Mauritania Mozambique e Nicaragua Niger Tanzania Uganda Vietnam Yemen Zambia	Pakistan India Bangladesh DRC	Burkina Guinea Guyana Honduras Mauritania Nicaragua Niger	Gambia Mozambique e Yemen	Albania Bolivia Ethiopia Ghana Tanzania Uganda Vietnam Zambia	Senegal Tajikistan Kyrgystan Kenya Rwanda

Notes

¹ EFA Global Monitoring Report 2002

² World Bank 2003

³ World Bank 2003

⁴ World Bank 2003

⁵ Commitment made by world leaders at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar. Repeated by G8 leaders at their summits in 2001 and 2002

⁶ Sources: Global Campaign for Education, Government of Mozambique

⁷ “Last chance in Monterrey” Oxfam 2002. See also World Bank (March 2002), Unicef (2000)

⁸ “A New Focus on Education for All”- statement of the G8 Leaders on education. Kananaskis 2002

⁹ “Last chance in Monterrey” Oxfam 2002. See also World Bank (March 2002), Unicef (2000)

¹⁰ Donor coordination in Ghana, Louise Hilditch and Roger Nunoo-Mettle, ActionAid, 1999.

¹¹ UK Government, International Financing Facility proposal, January 25 2003

¹² Data sources: World Bank 2002 and EFA Global Monitoring Report 2002

¹³ Information supplied by the NGO ‘Maarifa ni Ufunguo’, PO Box 15102, Arusha, Tanzania. Maarifa@meruonline.com. And from recent interviews by Oxfam in Tanzania.

¹⁴ Quoted from UK Government, International Financing Facility proposal, January 25 2003

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This paper was written by Oliver Buston. Oxfam acknowledges the assistance of Global Campaign for Education, Maarofa ni Ufunguo, Rosen, and SNV in its production. It is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues. The text may be freely used for the purposes of campaigning, education, and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full.

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