



Global Campaign for Education Briefing Paper

November 27th Donor Consortium

The future of 16 million children is at stake

The future of more than 16 million children in Africa and Latin America will be in the hands of western aid officials when they meet in Brussels on November 27th to decide how best to finance a 'Fast Track' initiative to get the world's children into school. The Education For All Donor Consortium meeting will be a litmus test of rich countries' support for the Millenium Development Goals. \$700 million is needed immediately to launch the initiative and get 16 million children into school in 12 countries.

November 21st 2002

act:onaid



Campaign for
Popular Education
(CAMPE Bangladesh)

**Brazilian
National
Campaign for
the Right to
Education**



Executive summary

The future of 16 million children¹ in Africa and Latin America will be in the hands of western aid officials when they meet in Brussels on November 27th to discuss how best to finance a global plan to get the world's children into school.

World leaders have already endorsed an ambitious action plan to achieve Education for All (EFA), at this year's G8 summit in Canada. Now this first ever EFA Donor Consortium meeting is a vital opportunity for governments to turn their support into action with hard pledges of cash. Officials will be presented with detailed proposals for delivering basic education for all children in at least twelve developing countries (Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guyana, Yemen and Tanzania) as part of the EFA action plan's 'Fast Track' initiative. These countries have come forward from an initial group of 18 countries identified as ready to receive additional aid in return for real progress they have made in reforming their education systems.

The EFA Fast Track initiative is already generating results on the ground. It is providing new incentives that are galvanizing action in developing countries. Previously marginalized education ministers are now taken seriously within their governments. Donors must respond by delivering on their frequently repeated pledge that "no country seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by lack of resources"². \$US 700 million per year is urgently needed to launch the EFA Fast Track initiative in these twelve countries.

The Fast Track scheme does not mean the creation of an education fund. Resources should come from a range of bilateral and multilateral sources. What matters is that these resources are coordinated in support of developing countries' national education plans. This week Canada joined the Netherlands in making a concrete financial commitment to the EFA Fast Track initiative. Sadly, early indications are that other countries are less willing to back their fine rhetoric with action. It seems likely that the donors will pick off the smaller countries on the Fast Track list, rather than supporting countries like Ethiopia, Uganda, and Mozambique that have the largest number of children out of school. Some donors will probably commit to modestly expand their aid for education efforts in Fast Track countries where they are already active. This will perpetuate the process whereby aid flows are driven by donor preferences rather than need or ability to use aid effectively.

- Germany seems unwilling to back its commitment to support up to 3 countries with a significant financial contribution
- Without a clear commitment from France, progress towards education for all in the Fast Track countries in francophone Africa is in danger of being held back (at present these countries rely on France for the bulk of their assistance)
- There is no indication that the US will support the initiative
- Latin American countries are in danger of being neglected because the USA and EU are the major donors in the region, and neither is yet ready to support the Fast Track initiative

The EFA Donor Consortium meeting is a litmus test of support for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed at halving global poverty by 2015. Rich countries must live up to their commitments. Their failure to do so would be an act of complacency that will trap 16 million children in a cycle of illiteracy and poverty.

Recommendations

- **Donors must immediately provide the \$700 million needed to launch the EFA Fast Track initiative in twelve countries. No country should be neglected. Aid levels should be determined by need and the ability of governments to deliver, not the strategic importance or particular countries for donors**
- **Donors must agree to a timetable for expansion of the EFA Fast Track scheme. All 18 countries on the initial Fast Track list should have financing secured for their EFA strategies by April 2003. Strategies to accelerate progress in the five high-population countries³ should be in place by April. An additional 18 countries should be invited to participate in the EFA Fast Track by September 2003**
- **Having a full Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) should not be enshrined as a prerequisite for eligibility. Having embarked on a serious education reform program, captured in a credible interim PRSP, should be sufficient to kick-start the Fast Track process**
- **Developing countries should not be overloaded with heavy commitments, without corresponding undertakings from donors to improve the quality and coordination of their aid efforts. Policy benchmarks enshrined in the Fast Track initiative need to be adapted to individual countries' circumstances, through a dialogue between government, donors, teachers' organizations and civil society**
- **Because of the high volume of work anticipated, a second Donor Consortium meeting should be held in six months. Starting in November 2003, the Donor Consortium should then meet annually following the High Level Group meeting convened by UNESCO**
- **Developing countries must urgently incorporate strategies for achieving gender equity in education in their EFA Fast Track proposals. On current trends 49 countries⁴ will miss the goal of gender equality in education by 2005.**

The Education For All Donor Consortium

When senior aid officials meet in Brussels on November 27th for the first Education For All Donor Consortium, the future for more than 16 million children will be in their hands.

In June 18 of the world's poorest countries were invited to participate in the Education For All (EFA) Fast Track Initiative. They were asked to prepare action plans for delivering basic education for all their children. Of these 18 countries, at least twelve (Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guyana, Yemen and Tanzania) will have finalized their action plans in time for the November 27th meeting.

Donors meeting in Brussels must not ignore the unique opportunity that this initiative presents. An inadequate response from rich countries would undermine the incentives that the fast track initiative has created. In contrast, speedy, coordinated and transparent donor action to meet their financing needs will create strong positive incentives for other countries to join a rising tide of countries delivering education for all.

These twelve countries need an additional \$700 million per year to implement their plans to get every child a basic education by 2015. Over 16 million children are out of school in these twelve countries.

180 governments, G8 leaders, and the world's finance and development ministers have all pledged that "no country seriously committed to Education For All will be thwarted in their achievement of this goals by lack of resources"⁵. Rich countries must now live up to that commitment. Their failure to do so would be an act of complacency that will trap 16 million children in a cycle of illiteracy and poverty. These children will not get a second chance at an education.

What is the Education For All Fast Track Initiative?

The Education For All Fast Track initiative is an attempt to develop a coordinated global effort to deliver basic education for every child. There is universal agreement that such a strategy will not work unless reform is driven by developing country governments.

The invitation to participate in the EFA Fast Track is already having a subtle but significant effect. New incentives have been created which

are galvanizing action at the national level. Previously marginalized education ministers are now taken seriously within their governments. Governments have already begun implementing positive policy changes⁶. 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. There is no neat sequence, as donors are suggesting – country reforms - efficiency savings - domestic resources freed up for education - donors meet the ‘real financing gap’. This pattern was not followed in the ‘success stories’ like Uganda. Rather, donors provided significant additional resources in the early phases of reform.

EFA Fast Track does not mean the creation of a global education fund. Instead the Fast Track initiative embraces a range of different financing mechanisms and approaches. Donors are invited to contribute in their preferred way. Resources should come from a range of bilateral and multilateral sources, and could include project as well as budget support. Some donors may want to channel funds through a dedicated facility, or develop ‘silent partner’ arrangements, while other donors utilize their existing bilateral programs.

None of these funding mechanisms should stand in the way of developing a common framework. What matters is that these resources are coordinated in support of national plans, with common monitoring and accountability mechanisms and that plans are fully financed in an ongoing and predictable manner. On the principle of subsidiarity, financing needs should be met in-country as much as possible.

The EFA Fast Track seeks to establish a practical way to meet countries’ needs for predictable long-term support, while also satisfying donors’ needs for tough criteria and robust accountability mechanisms so that additional aid is directed towards countries that are on a sound and sustainable path to education reform.

Donors urgently need to improve the quality as well as the quantity of their aid for basic education. This means genuine coordination at the national and global levels. At the national level, existing donor programs are usually fragmented and incoherent, and often reflect donor priorities at the expense of country needs (there are currently over 50 separate donor projects in the education sector in Honduras). This places an enormous administrative and financial burden on developing countries, and undermines their capacity to plan and budget for education. At the moment any change in donor willingness to coordinate more effectively is largely rhetorical. Genuine coordination and harmonization is needed – a shift to more

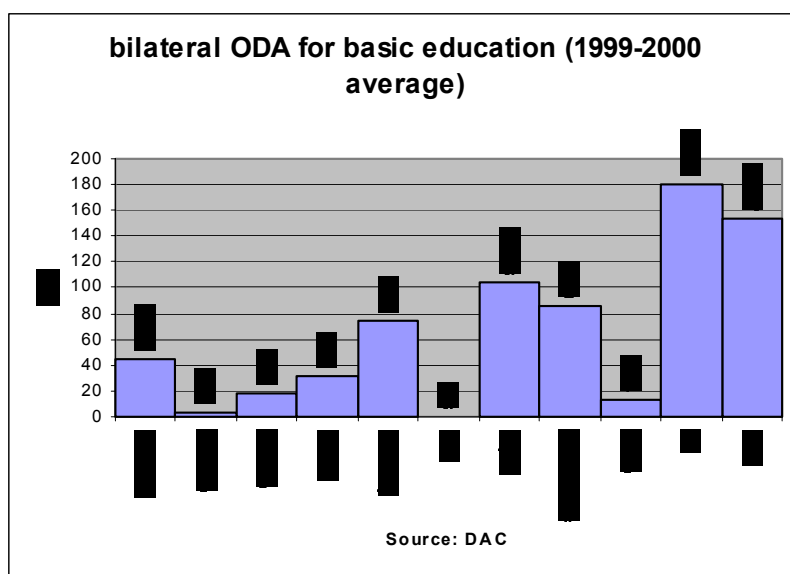
budget support, to cover recurrent expenditures, a single reporting system, multi-year commitments, and an engagement up to and beyond 2015.

At the global level, donors need to start delivering aid to those countries that need it most, and can use it most effectively. There needs to be a coordinated and systematic donor response to the education crisis in developing countries. Donors need to find ways of reaching countries they do not currently work in. Too many countries are falling through the gaps because donors do not consider them to be politically strategic, or because the donors that do support them do not focus on basic education (this is a serious problem in francophone Africa).

Current levels of aid for basic education

Existing aid flows to education are grossly inadequate given the scale of the challenge facing the world's poorest countries. Recent estimates show that \$10bn to \$13bn⁷ in additional aid is needed annually to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of Universal Primary Education by 2015. Yet between them, the major bilateral donors are currently committing just \$700m a year to basic education – or just over 2 cents in every dollar of aid.

Table 1: Donors fail to measure up



The Financing for Development Summit in Monterrey promised to reverse declining aid levels by targeting resources strategically at achieving the MDGs. Building on the Monterrey consensus, the April

2002 Development Committee⁸ communiqué made a commitment to, 'provide the necessary additional domestic and external resources' to achieve the education goals. In June, G8 leaders pledged to 'significantly increase the support provided by our bilateral aid agencies to basic education'⁹.

Yet so far, donors have conspicuously failed to deliver on these commitments.

The Donor Consortium is a litmus test of rich country commitment to the Millennium Development Goals and of the commitments to Education For All made by G8 leaders in June.

Will the donors deliver in Brussels?

The signs are not good, only the Netherlands and Canada have made a concrete commitment to the Fast Track Initiative (the commitment from the Netherlands is still far below the 15% of ODA the Dutch Government agreed to earmark for basic education). It is unclear whether other donors are prepared to deliver on their promises to the world's children.

German Development Minister Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul won applause for her announcement in April that Germany would support up to 3 of the Fast Track countries (Mozambique, Honduras, Guinea) and double aid for education by 2006. But so far Germany has failed to follow through on this commitment. Mozambique (see box 1) alone needs an immediate \$91 million to launch its plan to give every child a basic education. There is no sign that Germany is preparing to announce a commitment on this scale in the immediate future.

Box 1 Mozambique: teachers and children on the frontline again

Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in the world, but 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. But more than half of children aged 6-10 are still not in school, and only a third of teachers have professional training.

Now, Mozambique is facing another war – the war against HIV-AIDS and famine. 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. With the social fabric already fraying under the impact of AIDS, there is worrying evidence that children, and especially girls, will be hardest hit by the famine stalking the countryside. Hunger and disease together may force growing numbers of parents to once again withdraw their children from school, and as a result, Mozambique's fragile progress out of poverty may be halted.

In line with a comprehensive education reform program agreed with donors, the government has already increased education spending to 18% of its budget. But a further US\$91 million will be needed to fully fund Mozambique's education for all strategy this year. Moreover, 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.

The most likely scenario is that some donors will commit to very slightly expanding their aid for education efforts in those Fast Track countries where they are already active. This will perpetuate the process whereby aid flows are driven by the preferences of donors to work in certain countries. Of the initial group of twelve countries, a number are not currently recipients of large quantities of aid for basic education. Donors must not neglect these countries if they have demonstrated a serious commitment to education for all. The role of France will be critical. As the graph above shows, France's aid for basic education is very small, and yet France is the major donor engaged in the countries of francophone Africa on the Fast Track list. Without a strong commitment from France, progress towards education for all in francophone Africa will be held back.

Nicaragua is another country in danger of slipping through the net. The USA is an obvious partner for that country. USAID has been engaged in support for the education sector, but there is no sign yet that the USA is willing to commit the additional resources required to deliver education for all. As Box 2 illustrates, Nicaragua's record in boosting enrolment and gender equity in education is impressive. But Nicaragua will not achieve universal completion of basic education without additional external support.

Box 2 Nicaragua

Nicaragua has a strong track record of improving access to education, and the capacity to achieve universal primary completion. In 1993 about 21.5% of 7-12 year old children were not in school. This figure is now down to 12.1%. Girls' rate of enrolment in primary school (82%) is almost equal to boys' (83%).

To its credit, Nicaragua has created the capacity to monitor and evaluate its educational progress through a school tracking system which tracks information on infrastructure, teachers, and materials in every school in the country. Nicaragua has adopted innovative approaches to improving quality of education, like the "Model School Program" developed with the support of USAID and the school autonomy program. But universal completion of primary education in 2015 will not be reached without additional financing for a number of reasons:

- Nicaragua's population is young and growing – with over 50% of population below 16 years of age – the education system has to keep on expanding in order to maintain its current coverage.
- Poverty prevents children from going to school. About 50% of children not attending school in Nicaragua cite poverty as the main barrier to attendance. Moreover, children in extreme poverty are twice as likely to repeat and dropout than non-poor children.
- Another key barrier to school attendance and completion is the quality of education provided in schools. Lack of classroom space, lack of well-trained teachers, lack of school materials, and poorly designed curricula all deter children from attending school. Among girls, personal security is an additional reason given for non-attendance. Rural families are reluctant to send their girls long distances to get to school.

The Nicaraguan Government's strategy for achieving Education For All identifies 2 areas where additional resources are needed in the drive to get every child a basic education:

- An incentive fund to improve the quality of schooling
- Direct assistance to families of extremely poor children to stimulate their enrolment, attendance, and learning achievement.

This program deserves the full support of donors.

Expanding EFA Fast Track

An initial EFA Fast Track effort in twelve countries would only deal with the tip of the iceberg. These 12 countries account for only 16 million of the 125 million children who do not now attend school.

The EFA Fast Track needs to expand rapidly. According to the World Bank the goal of universal primary education will be missed in 88 countries, and 75 million children will remain out of school in 2015¹⁰. Despite the scale of the task, the education goals are achievable.

The original timetable for the Fast Track initiative envisaged an expansion phase starting in January 2003. A clear starting point would be serious efforts to accelerate progress in the five high-population countries (Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Pakistan, Nigeria) slated for analytical support during the initial Fast Track phase. At the same time, the international community needs to make a clear commitment to expand the Fast Track partnership to other countries as and when they become ready.

Many countries with strong commitment to the EFA goals are still several years away from a full PRSP. If this now becomes enshrined as a prerequisite for eligibility, educational improvements for millions of children will be needlessly postponed. Having embarked on a serious education reform program, captured in a credible Interim PRSP, should be sufficient to kick-start the Fast Track process.

Interim strategies are needed to help countries with weak policy environments. These countries urgently need coordinated donor support to meet their immediate education needs, and get 'on track' to achieve education for all, while simultaneously developing the long-term capacity to produce and implement national plans and poverty reduction strategies. 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.

Improving EFA Fast Track

The EFA Fast Track initiative seeks to base aid flows on transparent criteria. This is a positive shift, provided there is room for developing countries to participate in establishing these criteria. Their involvement is crucial, not only to build the genuine political commitment needed to move forward with difficult reforms, but more fundamentally, to ensure that the policy changes adopted are realistic, sustainable and in line with the country needs and priorities.

Developing countries should not be overloaded with heavy commitments, without corresponding undertakings from donors to improve the quality and coordination of their aid efforts. Policy norms that would be unrealistic and /or counterproductive in some countries (for example a stipulation that teachers' salaries should be capped at a certain level) should not be imposed as universal benchmarks.

The policy benchmarks enshrined in the Fast Track initiative need to be designed at the national level through dialogue between the government, donors, teachers' organizations and civil society if they are not simply to be an additional layer of conditionality. Without broader ownership, the Fast Track reform package is unlikely to reflect accurately the needs and priorities of developing countries, thereby reducing political commitment, and slowing implementation.

Although any decision-making process involves tensions between speed and ownership, the need to strengthen country-donor partnerships should not be used by donors as a pretext for slowing down the Fast Track initiative. Partnerships can only be built through the practical experience of developing and implementing plans, with the guaranteed financial support of donors.

Finally, far more serious consideration needs to be given to the role of EFA Fast Track in delivering the goal of gender equity in education by 2005. Developing countries urgently need to incorporate strategies for achieving gender parity in their EFA Fast Track proposals. Donors need to support them in these efforts, and to provide finances for delivery. There is also a need for greater coordination internationally and at country level between UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank in these efforts.

Recommendations

- **Donors must immediately provide the \$700 million needed to launch the EFA Fast Track initiative in twelve countries. No country should be neglected. Aid levels should be determined by need and the ability of governments to deliver, not the strategic importance or particular countries for donors**
- **Donors must agree to a timetable for expansion of the EFA Fast Track scheme. All 18 countries on the initial Fast Track list should have financing secured for their EFA strategies by April 2003. Strategies to accelerate progress in the five high-population countries¹¹ should be in place by April. An additional 18 countries should be invited to participate in the EFA Fast Track by September 2003**

- **Having a full Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) should not be enshrined as a prerequisite for eligibility. Having embarked on a serious education reform program, captured in a credible interim PRSP, should be sufficient to kick-start the Fast Track process**
- **Developing countries should not be overloaded with heavy commitments, without corresponding undertakings from donors to improve the quality and coordination of their aid efforts. Policy benchmarks enshrined in the Fast Track initiative need to be adapted to individual countries' circumstances, through a dialogue between government, donors, teachers' organizations and civil society**
- **Because of the high volume of work anticipated, a second Donor Consortium meeting should be held in six months. Starting in November 2003, the Donor Consortium should then meet annually following the High Level Group meeting convened by UNESCO**
- **Developing countries must urgently incorporate strategies for achieving gender equity in education in their EFA Fast Track proposals. On current trends 49¹² countries will miss the goal of gender equality in education by 2005.**

The Global Campaign for Education is a worldwide alliance of NGOs and trade unions active in more than 150 countries.

Members of the GCE's elected Board are: Actionaid Alliance, African Networks Campaign for Education for All (ANCEFA), Asia-Pacific Bureau for Adult Education (ASPBAE), Brazilian National Campaign for the Right to Education, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE Bangladesh), Education International, Global March Against Child Labour, Oxfam International, South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO).

Please send comments to Anne Jellema, Advocacy Coordinator (anne@campaignforeducation.org) GCE-CME, 5 bd du Roi Albert II, B-1210 Brussels, Belgium

www.campaignforeducation.org

End notes

¹ World Bank

² Declaration Made by 180 governments at the world education forum, Dakar, Senegal, 2000. Repeated by G8 leaders in 2001 and 2002

³ Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Pakistan, Nigeria

⁴ EFA Monitoring report, November 2002

⁵ See 1. above

⁶ Tanzania has eliminated fees but urgently needs additional resources to boost quality. Nicaragua has developed a school tracking system, a model school program, and is expanding its incentive scheme for girls.

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

⁸ The Committee of Finance and Development Ministers that oversees the work of the World Bank

⁹ "A New Focus on Education for All"- statement of the G8 Leaders on education. Kananaskis 2002

¹⁰ "Accelerating Progress towards EFA" World Bank, April 2002

¹¹ Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Pakistan, Nigeria

¹² EFA Monitoring report, November 2002