

EFA FTI Global and Regional Activities Program (GRA)

THEMATIC AREA: FINANCING

Comments from UNICEF

- **Equity in financing:** The paper rightly underlines geographic and group disparities in education financing (both points 3. and 4. in the background section of the paper are related and should figure under equity issues). However, equity is not only needed in analysis but also in budgeting and financial allocations, and the FTI needs to be providing support to countries in this regard. UNICEF and the World Bank are for example developing a bottleneck analysis approach to guide equity-based costing exercises and projection models.
- **Financing and capacity development:** Inequities in financing are often linked to capacities. For example, the low absorption capacity of poor-performing districts leads to under-utilization and in turn lower allocations and widening disparities between districts and regions. What can the FTI do to support countries in this regard?
- **Tracking resources:** On activity one (reporting on financing flows), is the tracking taken to the school level?
- **School Fee Abolition Initiative (SFAI) and household cost-barrier to education:** While the issue of private costs of schooling is highlighted in the background section of the paper, nothing is proposed in terms of activities. On the other hand, household cost-barriers to education (including school fees and other direct and indirect costs, as well as opportunity costs) continue to constitute a, if not *the*, major barrier to education access, especially within the present context of chronic economic and food crises. There is need to maintain the focus on such barrier and on the continuing creeping of multiple costs and burdens of poor families for the education of their children. If governments and the international community do not act on such cost-barriers, the poor will continue to be excluded and marginalized. SFAI was launched jointly by UNICEF and the World Bank in 2005 (and later joined by other partners like UNESCO IIEP) with the objectives of
 - developing an evidence base on lessons learned and for operational strategies to address household cost-barriers to education;
 - (2) providing technical support to countries to integrate effective strategies into education sector plans; and
 - (3) enhancing the global and national policy dialogue on the issue.SFAI has succeeded in initiating and supporting sound school fee abolition efforts in more than 30 countries and in integrating such efforts in country education sector planning and reform processes (including FTI processes). Several initiatives for South-South exchanges on school fee abolition were facilitated. The knowledge base has been enhanced through several publications as well as an Operational Guidance that is now used within the framework of country planning and reform processes (see the following link: http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_49923.html). UNICEF is presently consolidating the work on SFAI and
 - extending the analysis and support to countries to include other more specific dimensions of implementation, for example related to the proliferation of the private provision of education and to school grants (as an effective implementation mechanism and strategy for equitable resource allocation).
 - A baseline is going to be developed (through a yearly questionnaire to countries) to monitor the status of school fees and school fee abolition policies and to organize more systematic support to countries and ensure evidence-based advocacy and dialogue.
- **Returns on Investment:** Much of the knowledge on returns on investment in education is dated, or uses formulas that rely on aggregate projections and do not explore

differences in returns amongst sub-populations. There is also limited knowledge on stakeholder perceptions on returns on investment, as well as perceptions on actual costs of additional years of primary and secondary education. In practice, there are a few countries which have developed communication strategies to inform adolescents about the returns in projected additional income for additional years of completed secondary, which led to improvements in retention rates. In general, we need to know much more about this area.

- **Financing Coordinated Social Protection or “systems” of social protection:** This is a field that highlights how the financing of education goes beyond the education sector itself and it has equity as well as efficiency implications. Ministries of Education maintain a broad range of social protection policies and budgets specifically targeted to support disadvantaged students and schools (for example incentives for orphans, scholarships for girls, higher block grants for remote schools, etc.). In addition, Ministries of Social Welfare, of Interior, of War Veterans and Invalids and other Ministries also provide social protection resources to families linked to school attendance or with an impact on schooling (for example cash transfers). It is important – for efficiency as well as equity purposes – to support national mapping exercises of social protection programs/policies and reviews of the fund flow effectiveness between the various programs for various disadvantaged populations. UNICEF is engaged (though in a limited way) in highlighting this issue within the framework of the Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI).
- **Innovative financing** should link financing with innovation in education and collect examples of where this has been possible.