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### **Most Countries On Track to Reach 2010 Education Goal, Says Education Fast Track Initiative Report**

*Dakar, December 10, 2007* – Most of the 32 countries supported by the Education for All – Fast Track Initiative (FTI) are on track to have all six-year-olds enrolled in Grade One by 2010, a critical step on the way to achieving the goal of universal primary education by 2015. However, more funding will be needed as the Initiative continues to expand to include more countries, says a report released today in Dakar.

The FTI Annual Report 2007, “Quality Education for All Children: Meeting the Challenge,” documents progress in 32 countries with education sector plans endorsed by the FTI. Eighteen of these countries receive financial support from the Catalytic Fund, a multi-donor trust fund that provides additional financing to help countries implement their education sector plans.

*“For the first time in two generations we are seeing striking improvements in the number of children enrolled in primary school,”* said **Bernhard Kühn, Head, Division of Education, Health and Population Policy, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany**, G8 President and one of the FTI Co-chairs. *“The G8 are committed to supporting the FTI countries in their efforts to give all children a good primary education.”*

Altogether, the 32 FTI countries had 60 million children in school in 2005, which is 12 million more than in 2000, a 26 percent increase in five years. These countries have also made good progress in terms of getting more girls into school. If recent trends are maintained, all but three of the current FTI countries will achieve the goal of gender parity in primary education by 2015.

*“The FTI countries are making impressive progress, thanks to the commitment of their governments and the support of the donors, including the World Bank’s zero-interest lending arm, the International Development Association (IDA),”* said **Joy Phumaphi, Vice President for Human Development at the World Bank**, one of the FTI’s key partners.

*“An important challenge now is to reach the children who are still not in school, mainly*



*girls and youngsters who are from poor families, live in rural areas, belong to an ethnic or linguistic minority, or are disabled,” she added.*

Another priority for the FTI countries is to improve the quality of education children receive once they are in school. A positive sign noted in the FTI Annual Report is that most of these countries have now developed some capacity to measure how well children are learning. In fact, seven FTI countries have participated in one of the major international tests—a significant turnaround as no low-income country had participated in such testing prior to 2003.

The FTI continues to grow and, in November 2007, São Tomé & Príncipe became the latest country with an endorsed education sector plan. Three more countries are set to have their education sector plans endorsed by the end of 2007 and another seven by the end of 2008.

As the FTI expands, the financing gap for primary education is a growing concern. In addition to bilateral aid, donors have pledged a total of US\$1.2 billion since 2004 to the Catalytic Fund, but the FTI Annual Report says that there will not be sufficient funds for countries joining the Initiative in 2008. It estimates that, overall, the FTI countries will need an average of an additional US\$1 billion in external support each year over the next three years. The report calls on donors to meet their commitment to provide long-term predictable funding for countries with credible education sector plans.

*“We now have a model in place that works and it is time for the donors to move from promises to action,” said Desmond Bermingham, Head of the FTI Secretariat. “There is an urgent need both to increase aid for education and to make it more effective.”*

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#### **About FTI:**

The Education for All – Fast Track Initiative (FTI) was launched in 2002 as a global partnership between donor and developing countries to ensure accelerated progress toward the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015. All low-income countries that demonstrate serious commitment to achieving universal primary completion can receive support from FTI. Over 30 bilateral and multilateral donors support FTI, including UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank.

For more information, visit: [www.education-fast-track.org](http://www.education-fast-track.org)