

EDUCATION PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT FUND (EPDF)

STRATEGY COMMITTEE MEETING

CAIRO, NOVEMBER 12, 2006

MINUTES

1. **Participating members:** A meeting of the Education Program Development Fund (EPDF) Strategy Committee was convened in Cairo, Egypt, on November 12, 2006. It was chaired by Ruth Kagia, Director of Education, World Bank. Members of the EPDF SC in attendance were: Nora Fyles (Canada); Maire Matthews, Keratile Thabana (Ireland); Ronald Siebes, Rebekka van Roemburg, Arjan Schuthof (Netherlands); Olav Seim, Vegard Pedersen (Norway); Valeria Sakharova, Roman Alexandrov (Russia); Kaviraj Appadu, Maria Tegborg (Sweden); Halima Begum (UK).
2. **Observers included:** Nadine Dusepulchre (Belgium); Khawla Shaheen (UNESCO); Renata Russell (European Commission); Poul Erik Rasmussen (Denmark); Jussi Karakoski (Finland); Alain Dhersigny, Andre Pouilles-Duplaix, Jean-Claude Balmes (France); Bernhard Kühn, Susanne Schroth, Herbert Bergmann, Temby Caprio, Wolfgang Bichmann (Germany); Teresa Savanella (Italy); Keiko Mizuno, Noriko Matsuda (Japan); Mari Cruz del Saso (Spain); Dina Craissati (UNICEF); Nicholas Krafft, Donald Bundy, Mercy Tembon, Christopher Thomas, Jee-Peng Tan, Olivia Elee, Keiko Inoue, (World Bank). Participants from the FTI Secretariat were Desmond Bermingham, Robert Prouty, Kouassi Soman, Luc Gacougnolle, Palak Mehra, Anna Triponel and Michelle Mesen.
3. Two background papers titled: (i) EPDF Summary Progress Report, November 2006; and (ii) EPDF Regional Annexes, November 2006 had been circulated to members of the Committee before the meeting. The first paper was prepared by the FTI Secretariat from inputs provided by regional teams in the detailed annexes posted on the FTI website at www.fasttrackinitiative.org.
4. In addition to a few introductory remarks by the Chair, the agenda items were:
 - Status update and report on progress since the last Strategy Committee meeting in March 2006;
 - Progress and challenges in Africa (AFR) and East Asia & Pacific (EAP);
 - Other business and next steps.
5. Robert Prouty, Deputy Head of the FTI Secretariat, presented a summary of progress based on the November 2006 Status Report. He briefly highlighted the following points:
6. **As main achievements**, he indicated that about 60 country programs have received financial support from the EPDF across six regions to date. Over the past three years, the EPDF has helped 13 countries prepare national education plans which have been successfully appraised and endorsed by FTI Partners. In addition, EPDF has also helped finance several capacity building activities as well as seminars and knowledge sharing events across many regions.

7. **EPDF financial picture.** Overall, donors have pledged a total of US\$57.5 million through 2008, of which US\$31.5 million represent future commitments. Over the past year, the number of donors has doubled from 4 to 8 and financial pledges have also doubled.

8. **Allocations and disbursements.** Since the beginning of its operations in early 2005, the EPDF has received a cumulative amount of US\$26 million from donors. The Fund has allocated 94 percent (US\$24.2 million) of funds received to the six regional teams of the World Bank. Cumulative expenditures incurred to date amount to US\$5 million (21 percent), of which US\$3.2 million has been disbursed (13 percent). Various reasons explained this slow pace of implementation and disbursement. In some cases such as in the East Asia & Pacific region, it appears to be an accounting issue. Indeed, many country teams were late in recording commitments and expenses in the official World Bank accounting systems. In other cases such as the Africa and LAC regions, the inability to give grants to key strategic partners has led to delays. Steps have been taken to allow for provision of grants in the short-term.

9. **Opportunities and challenges.** The EPDF has proved to be an effective mechanism for catalyzing and nurturing country level dialogue on critical issues in education and for supporting in-country capacity to prepare credible sector plans. In order to build on this promise, proposals for broadening the reach of the EPDF were presented to the Strategy Committee. In that context, three main issues which were suggested for discussions in order to inform the next revision of the Concept Note. These are as follows: (i) recipient-executed approach vs. Bank-executed approach at the country level; (ii) better collaboration with other partners; and (iii) responsive support for “Thematic Work.”

10. **Progress and challenges in Africa and East Asia & Pacific.** Two Sector Managers were invited to highlight implementation progress in their specific regions and provide a flavor of steps taken in each case to seek opportunities while addressing challenges. Both Regional Managers (Jee-Peng Tan, AFR; and Christopher Thomas, EAP) reiterated main achievements in their regions as summarized in the Progress Report; and outlined their strategic approach in making the EPDF instrument more participatory and responsive to changing priorities and country needs.

11. **Other business and next steps.** Many participants expressed their opinions on the proposed changes and potential implications these changes may have on FTI Working Groups such as the “Capacity Building” and the “Fragile States”. To move the agenda forward, it was agreed that a task force will be charged with reviewing the items listed under paragraph 9 above (opportunities and challenges). The task force is comprised of the following members: (i) Olav Seim (Chair, Norway); (ii) Temby Caprio (Germany); (iii) Halima Begum (UK); (iv) Robert Prouty (FTI Secretariat); and Jee-Peng Tan, Christopher Thomas (World Bank). In addition to reviewing these three proposals, the task force would inter alia, identify key priorities to be funded under the EPDF Trust Fund in a manner that strengthens synergy with other Trust Funds such as the BNPP and define key outcomes that would be expected from activities funded under the EPDF. Findings and recommendations from the task force will be presented to the spring Technical Meeting in March/April 2007.

Cleared with and cc: Ruth Kagia, Chair; and EPDF Strategy Committee Members