

**Mid-Term Evaluation of the EFA Fast Track Initiative**

# **Draft Synthesis Report**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**19 November 2009**





## Acknowledgements

The mid-term evaluation of the Fast Track Initiative has been carried out by a consortium of Cambridge Education, Mokoro Ltd. and Oxford Policy Management contracted by the World Bank on behalf of the FTI partnership.

The evaluation team has been led by Stephen Lister. The core team members were; Manos Antoninis, Felicity Binns, Roy Carr-Hill, Mailan Chiche, Catherine Dom, Keith Hinchliffe, Fred Merttens, Georgina Rawle, Abby Riddell, Anthea Sims Williams, Muriel Visser-Valfrey, and Eric Woods. The country reports and desk studies were carried out by members of the core team in conjunction with: Hassan Abdulmalik, Sulleiman Adediran, Zuber Ahmed, Emily Allardyce, Terry Allsop, Ramlatu Attah, Masooda Bano, Ann Bartholomew, Serge Bayala, Clare O'Brien, Elisabet Jané Camacho, Tim Cammack, Elsa Duret, Stephen Jones, Ian MacAuslan, Felicia Omibon, Eldah Onsomu, Ray Purcell, Nick Santcross, Tuomas Takala, George Taylor, Khieu Vicheanon and Daniel Wilde. Additional support to the evaluation team was provided by: Stephanie Allan, Valentina Barca, Rebecca Bird, Philip Lister, Frieda McAlear, Luca Pellerano, Daniel Ross, Sarah Scott and Shakil Sidat.

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The Synthesis Report, the Preliminary Report, the Evaluation Framework and the accompanying country studies and working papers can all be downloaded from <http://www.camb-ed.com/fasttrackinitiative/>.

The evaluation team is very grateful to the FTI Secretariat, to all interviewees and to others who helped the team to locate documents and data and generally to understand the FTI.

This report is based on the work of an independent evaluation team. It has been reviewed by the Evaluation Oversight Committee (EOC) which determined that it meets an objective set of quality standards for an evaluation of this nature (based in part on DAC guidelines and on DFID's quality assurance guidelines for programme evaluations) and that it sufficiently meets most of the EOC requirements for having satisfied the relevant portion of the terms of reference to be shared as a discussion document.

This determination in no way signifies the endorsement of the report's conclusions or recommendations by the EOC as a whole, by any of its individual members or by the agencies they represent. The analyses, interpretations and opinions expressed in this report are those of the evaluation team.

## Executive Summary

### Overview

S1 The Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA FTI) is a unique partnership, which aims to accelerate progress towards quality universal primary education.

S2 The FTI was launched in 2002. It arose out of the commitments of the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000) which adopted a range of goals and targets to achieve Education for All. It styled itself as a "compact" in which credible education sector plans would receive support to ensure their fulfilment. It tried not to operate as a global fund: it emphasised coordinated action at country level, and put primary responsibility on in-country donors to mobilise and deliver external support for education sector plans that were endorsed by the FTI. However, a centrally operated Catalytic Fund (CF) has become an increasingly important feature of the FTI, which has also provided technical support through an Education Program Development Fund (EPDF). By the end of 2008, 36 countries' education sector plans had been endorsed.

S3 This is the draft report of a mid-term evaluation, required to review progress and to make recommendations going forward. It finds that the FTI has both strengths and weaknesses. It has made positive contributions towards universal primary education, but these fall short of the FTI's ambitions. This reflects weaknesses in the FTI's design and implementation. However, the FTI has many strengths, and the need for the FTI is as great as ever. The FTI should be thoughtfully redesigned and reinvigorated, building on its strengths, to become a more effective partnership in pursuit of the EFA objectives.

### Origins and characteristics of the FTI

S4 The 164 governments which are party to the Dakar Framework for Action affirmed that *"no countries seriously committed to Education for All will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by lack of resources"* (World Education Forum, 2000). The aftermath of the World Declaration of Education for All (Jomtien, 1990) had been disappointing. The instigators of the FTI were determined that the follow-up to Dakar should be more effective. The launch of the FTI was part of a broader movement to operationalise international commitments to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Monterrey compact on financing for development (March 2002). The G8 group pursued the primary education objectives although its work was later integrated with preparatory work that had been led by the World Bank (WB).

S5 The WB proposals were embodied in a 2002 Action Plan. This built on research which explored the reasons why some countries had been more successful than others in achieving universal primary education. The Action Plan advocated Universal Primary Completion (UPC) as the key test of progress towards EFA. The Plan also identified four "gaps" that needed to be addressed simultaneously – data, policies, capacity, financing – and called for coordinated action by donors to scale up aid to those countries with credible education sector plans (ESPs). A test of the ESP's credibility would be its attention to the guidance embodied in what became known as the Indicative Framework (IF) – a set of policy benchmarks based on the experience of a group of good performers.

S6 The original proposal was to pilot this approach in a small number of countries, but from the outset there was pressure to be more ambitious. When the FTI was formally launched, 18 countries were invited to submit proposals, and a further five large countries

(India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo) were invited to join an "analytical fast track".

S7 The urgency to convert deeds into actions explains why the FTI was launched in 2002, supported by a very small secretariat based in the World Bank, before the details of its purpose, structure and operations had been worked out. These details were the subject of extended discussion and the agreements that were eventually reached were only finalised in the FTI Framework document published in 2004.

S8 In its origins, the FTI was entirely a donor initiative. Gaining agreement on the initial design and aims of the FTI was difficult, and the lengthy process of reaching consensus amongst donors required much negotiation and compromise. Differing interpretations about its design and implementation have persisted, and have influenced continuing debate about, and adjustments to, the FTI's governance arrangements.

## The design and governance of the FTI

S9 The FTI's design was crystallised in the 2004 FTI Framework document. By then it had already been agreed that the FTI would open up to all low income/IDA countries which could meet the criteria for endorsement.

S10 As outlined in the Framework document, the FTI's **goals** are to accelerate UPC by promoting: (a) more efficient aid for primary education; (b) sustained increases in aid for primary education; (c) sound sector policies in education; (d) adequate and sustainable domestic financing for education; (e) increased accountability for sector results; and (f) mutual learning on what works to improve primary education outcomes and advance EFA goals. The FTI is guided by five **principles**: country ownership, benchmarking, support linked to performance, lower transaction costs, and transparency.

S11 The FTI design reflects a conscious effort to avoid operating as a vertical global fund. It gives the responsibility to in-country donors first to assess education sector plans (ESPs) and then to mobilise support for credible plans that are endorsed by the partnership. The endorsement of an education plan that satisfied certain criteria (including taking into account the technical benchmarks of the FTI Indicative Framework) would serve as a signal to donors that a committed government, implementing a credible plan, deserved their support. A "compact" between the partner government and donors would then commit country partners to working towards improved planning, monitoring and greater domestic commitment, whilst development partners would agree to scale up funding, support capacity enhancement, and align with government priorities and systems.

S12 It was expected that additional external financing (to fill the "financing gap") would come through the regular channels of bilateral and multilateral support. However, a Catalytic Fund (CF) was also established in March 2003. The CF was originally intended as a transitory arrangement only for "donor orphans". The CF was reviewed in 2007 and expanded to provide longer term and more substantial volumes of funding for which almost all FTI-endorsed countries could be eligible.

S13 The Education Program Development Fund (EPDF) was set up in November 2004 as a second trust fund to provide technical assistance for the development of sustainable national education sector programmes. Both trust funds have been managed by the World Bank under separate governance arrangements which involve only those donors contributing to the funds.

S14 The governance arrangements of the FTI involved a large annual (later two-yearly) forum – the Partnership Meeting – to set strategy, with a small Steering Committee as the main decision-making body. The Steering Committee, which operated by consensus, had rotating co-chairs – one G8 donor and one non-G8 donor, reflecting the G8 origins of the initiative. Later, representation was given to partner countries and civil society organisations. Topical issues were taken forward by working groups and task teams, and the Secretariat, although it has grown, has remained very lean.

S15 Efforts to refine and adapt the FTI's governance have continued. These have included recent efforts to define country-level processes more clearly, and to agree on the aid modalities that should be preferred. The original focus on the Local Donor Group (LDG) has been broadened to emphasise the role of Local Education Groups (LEGs), which include government and civil society representatives. Work to define the FTI's relationship with "fragile states" began in 2005, but an FTI funding mechanism for such states has yet to be finalised.

S16 Major governance reforms agreed at the end of 2008 give decision-making powers to a Board, which (as of mid-2009) replaces the Steering Committee. The Board will have an independent chair who will also chair the CF and EPDF committees. The present EPDF arrangements expire in 2010 and a task team has conducted a thorough review of its role. There is now also provision for agencies other than the World Bank to be "supervising entity" for CF grants; the Netherlands in Zambia is so far the only non-WB agency to take on this role.

## **The implementation of the FTI**

S17 Over time, access to the Catalytic Fund has become an increasingly important feature of involvement in the FTI. By the end of 2008, the education plans of 36 countries had been endorsed by the FTI and 30 of them had received allocations from the CF. Total CF allocations stood at USD 1.4 billion, of which USD 890m was reflected in grant agreements with the recipients, and USD 445m had been disbursed. 17 donors had made contributions to the CF, but just three of them – Spain, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom – accounted for more than 70% of pledges. 56 countries had benefited from EPDF funding (about USD 29m in total), with three of the "analytical fast track" countries – India, Pakistan and Bangladesh – among the largest recipients.

S18 Country-level experience of the FTI has been diverse. Some countries that were invited to join the FTI in the initial round did not submit proposals: the reasons included confusion about the nature of FTI, lack of in-country capacity to fulfil technical requirements, and some governments' judgment that they had little to gain by doing so. Many countries already had ongoing processes to improve and fund education sector plans before joining FTI. In some other countries (e.g. Nicaragua) the FTI endorsement influenced the establishment of more coordinated planning and monitoring. Several countries (e.g. Burkina Faso, Mozambique and Ethiopia) have had two rounds of engagements with the FTI, with contrasting experiences. In the early round, they were not eligible for the Catalytic Fund under "donor orphan" rules, and any financial effect of endorsement was to be through the support of existing donors; more recent engagement has directly focused on the (expanded) CF. Some endorsed countries (e.g. Vietnam) have had only a low profile engagement with the FTI since endorsement.

S19 Countries vary in terms of the use to which CF funds are put. In some countries funding goes to specific priorities within the sector plan; in others the funding has gone into pooled mechanisms (e.g. Mozambique). This has often been a function of the context (e.g. the existence of a pooled fund) and the donor personnel in country when the FTI process

starts. Funding by the FTI through the CF has been provided for a variety of activities, in some cases outside of primary education (e.g. in Moldova for Early Childhood Education).

## Task and methods of the evaluation

S20 The FTI set up an Evaluation Oversight Committee (EOC) to commission an independent mid-term evaluation. The evaluation team was fielded by a consortium of Cambridge Education, Mokoro Ltd. and Oxford Policy Management contracted by the World Bank on behalf of the FTI partnership. The evaluation is guided by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation guidelines, and by guidelines for evaluating global partnerships.<sup>1</sup> The terms of reference (TOR) require the evaluation to consider the FTI's relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, and also to make recommendations to strengthen it. The high level evaluation questions are as follows:

(1) *The Relevance of FTI Objectives and Goals to Country Educational and Development Needs:* Is what FTI aims to accomplish consistent with current needs and priorities of FTI client countries? What can be done to ensure the relevance of FTI going forward?

(2) *FTI's Contribution to Country Progress in Accelerating Action on EFA and Related Processes:* To what extent is the FTI accomplishing what it was designed to do, namely, accelerating progress on EFA? Are FTI mechanisms and processes contributing effectively to this? How can FTI mechanisms and processes be improved to maximise their contributions going forward?

(3) *FTI's Contribution to Improved Resource Mobilization and Aid Effectiveness:* Has the FTI helped mobilise domestic and international resources in support of EFA and helped donor agencies to adopt more efficient development assistance strategies based on Paris Declaration ideals? How can FTI best help mobilise resources and improve aid effectiveness going forward?

S21 The evaluation methodology has been based upon contribution analysis. This approach recognises that FTI's activities are (often deliberately) interwoven with a wider set of activities oriented towards the same objectives in individual countries and internationally. It seeks first to establish the broader set of activities and effects, and then to use both quantitative and qualitative evidence to assess the FTI contribution to them. This reflects the fact that the evaluation's task is not simply to discover *what has happened in FTI endorsed countries*, but to assess *what difference FTI has made to those countries*. The complexity of the FTI itself, and of its interactions with other activities, are a recognised challenge for the evaluation. Other challenges include the relatively short duration of the FTI (which makes it impractical to assess impact at this stage), continual changes in the FTI's design since it began, and the difficulties of obtaining internationally comparable data of high quality, especially for more recent years.

S22 The evaluation began in September 2008 and has involved extensive documentary analysis, data analysis at global and country levels, interviews with over 750 stakeholders representing the full range of FTI constituencies, and a set of country case studies.

S23 The FTI has stressed its country-driven approach, and this gives the evaluation's country case studies particular importance. Case studies cannot be statistically representative of the whole set of countries with which the FTI has interacted, but care was taken to ensure that the case study countries covered a range in terms of geographical and other attributes, and in terms of the nature and length of their engagement with the FTI. Nine full case studies involved substantial country-level work during the first half of 2009.

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank, Independent Evaluation Group (2007), *Sourcebook for Evaluating Global and Regional Partnership Programs: Indicative Principles and Standards*.

They covered Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan and Yemen. Desk studies were undertaken for a further eight countries: Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali, Moldova, Rwanda, Uganda, Vietnam and Zambia.

S24 The designated audiences for the evaluation are: *the full FTI partnership (partner country actors at the national and sub-national levels, and representatives from participating development agencies and civil society organizations), the FTI Steering Committee (which commissioned the study), and the FTI Secretariat (TOR ¶16)*. The methodology also included ongoing dialogue with the members of the partnership and solicitation of inputs into the intermediate products of the evaluation. These products included a detailed evaluation framework, a series of working papers, a preliminary report which was presented to the Copenhagen Partnership Meeting in April 2009, and the draft country reports.

S25 The TOR specify an evaluation of the FTI from its origins until September 2008. In practice, the evaluation and its recommendations take account of FTI developments through October 2009, including the most recent changes to the FTI's governance.

## Evaluation conclusions

### Conclusion 1 The FTI's aims were and remain important

S26 The reasons for giving global importance to basic education remain valid. EFA Global Monitoring Reports (2002–2009) show that there has been some encouraging progress towards UPC but many countries are off track for achieving the education MDGs and the EFA goals and targets. Most progress towards UPC has been achieved through national efforts drawing on domestic resources and initiatives, but international assistance has made a valuable contribution. Overall, there has been less progress than was hoped towards the education MDGs and EFA targets, and global efforts need to be reinvigorated.

S27 On available education indicators since 1999, the countries endorsed by the FTI have tended to perform better than the eligible countries that are not yet endorsed. Since (a) the FTI selects better performers, (b) FTI inputs are in most cases a small part of overall inputs, and (c) many endorsements are very recent, this cannot be taken as proof of the FTI's effectiveness. The evaluation's overall conclusions are based on a careful review of global data and the country case studies.

### Conclusion 2 The FTI has made positive contributions

S28 In the context of the efforts at promoting EFA, the evaluation finds that FTI has made significant tangible and intangible contributions both at global level, and in selected countries.

S29 *The FTI has been an important, inclusive global forum, especially for donors.* It is valued by education donors at headquarters level as a mechanism that enables them to work together across agencies and to develop common strategies and approaches to shared issues and problems.

S30 *The FTI has played an important role in keeping UPC and EFA on the international agenda.* There has also clearly been more systematic monitoring of basic education overall since Dakar. This work has been done by partners (UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR), OECD DAC) with whom the FTI Secretariat has collaborated for its own reporting.

S31 *The FTI has reinforced the focus of education donors on supporting country-owned plans and processes.* In doing so, it has built on and complemented existing trends towards

sector approaches and more systematic planning to achieve such goals as EFA and the MDGs. Efforts to make FTI guidelines more comprehensive reflect donor collaboration at global level to align their approaches. The value of performing policy simulations and checking their fiscal realism has been recognised, as has the importance of many of the policy issues highlighted by the Indicative Framework.

S32 *The FTI has sought to further the aid effectiveness agenda.* By advocating for ownership, for using existing structures and processes, and for harmonisation and alignment, the FTI has sought to ensure the application of the Paris Declaration principles to the education sector, both globally and at country level.

S33 *The Catalytic Fund has been an important additional channel of support for basic education.* For a few committed donors the CF has provided a means for scaling up their financial effort. The CF is seen at country level as being the main added value of the FTI, and is for most countries the main reason to seek endorsement. In some countries, a significant proportion of basic education funding is provided through the CF, and in selected settings the CF has provided innovative financing. The CF contribution to aid commitments to basic education has been modest in global terms but has been rapidly increasing.

S34 *The EPDF has provided useful technical support.* Support for the use of simulation models to strengthen sector analysis and planning has been important in a number of countries, and has improved the quality of ESPs.

### **Conclusion 3 Overall, however, the FTI's contributions have fallen short of its ambitions and of its reasonable expectations**

*With respect to resource mobilisation, the results have been disappointing, globally and in most countries.*

S35 The FTI identified finance as one of the key constraints to accelerating UPC. It specifically set out to promote: a) sustained increases in aid for primary education; b) more efficient aid for primary education; and c) adequate and sustainable domestic financing for education.

S36 Aid commitments to education generally and to basic education in particular increased significantly between 1999 and 2004, but there has been little growth in either since then. By 2007, aid commitments to basic education were 25% lower than at their peak in 2004. The global evidence therefore does not indicate that the FTI has had the large positive effect on the level of external financing for education or basic education that was envisaged at its inception.

S37 With some exceptions, there has been significant real growth in current expenditure on education and basic education from domestic sources. Nevertheless, in most cases the influence of the FTI on this trend was judged by the evaluation to be marginal. Government commitment to primary education was already evident in the pre-endorsement period, and other major drivers have played a more significant role, such as economic growth, the move to sector-wide approaches (SWAps), debt relief through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, a strong increase in general budget support (GBS) levels, and/or political changes which put more emphasis on primary education.

S38 Two key elements in the FTI's resource mobilisation strategy appear from the country case studies not to have met their intended objectives. Firstly, the use of the financing gap as an aid mobilisation tool and as a basis to decide upon CF allocations has been

problematic: financing gaps have not been calculated in consistent or objective ways, and CF allocation criteria have not been consistent or strategic in their application. Secondly, the catalytic effect of endorsement has not met expectations in terms of scale or sustainability, mainly due to lack of understanding of the key drivers of donor allocations, weak communication between global and local level, and a lack of monitoring.

S39 Various factors were found to have limited the influence of the FTI processes on domestic budget allocations. These included a lack of engagement with Ministries of Finance and national Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) processes, and the choice of projects or pooled funds as aid modalities. There are some notable exceptions where FTI has had a positive influence on domestic budget allocations, in particular when the CF has been provided through sector budget support and Ministries of Finance have been actively involved.

*The FTI's added value in addressing the key gaps has generally been less than the FTI has expected or assumed*

S40 In addition to an impact on financing, the FTI expected to address other important "gaps" by promoting stronger policy and planning processes, strengthening capacity, and promoting data collection and monitoring and evaluation. While the FTI has made some contributions to these areas, the evaluation found that overall its added value has been considerably less than expected.

S41 **On policy and planning.** This is an area where the FTI has sought to play a key role. However, most of the policy and planning emphasis has been on the endorsement process, with far less attention given to the subsequent monitoring and review of implementation at country level. The Indicative Framework has not been the central feature of endorsed ESPs that was anticipated. In several countries, the IF was interpreted as an instrument of conditionality; in others it was used – more in line with FTI guidelines – to inform dialogue; and in some it was not used at all. Its use as a framework for monitoring country performance has been very limited.

S42 The guidelines for appraisal and endorsement have tended to keep the donors in the forefront of the action, and much responsibility has been placed upon the activities of the LDG and especially the lead donor ("coordinating agency"). The participation of in-country stakeholders has been very variable, and the evaluation found that there are serious issues related to the capacity of both LEGs and LDGs. Changes in donor staffing policies and practices have tended to reduce the capacity of in-country donor groups. Most engagement by LDGs has been during the process of plan preparation (or adaptation) and endorsement, and has tended to diminish once approvals and funding have been granted. There is still much scope for improvement in the part played by key civil society actors and by parliaments.

S43 A Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was a prerequisite for FTI endorsement, but FTI processes (appraisal, endorsement, CF funding) have tended to focus principally on the education sector (and on primary education in particular). Finance ministries, other relevant ministries, as well as relevant sections within aid agencies (related to macro finance), have not, in general, been sufficiently involved in FTI-related processes. Finally, there has also been a lack of clarity on the emphasis to be given to UPC relative to other EFA goals and indeed to the wider education sector.

S44 **On capacity development.** The FTI's perspective on capacity has moved forward from the original depiction of "capacity gaps" to the more holistic approach that is now reflected in the FTI's *capacity development* guidelines – but these are recent and have yet to

be widely used at country level. Most countries continue to lack comprehensive capacity development approaches, and the FTI has not significantly contributed to increasing their prevalence or strengthening country ownership of capacity development support. The FTI's own direct contributions to capacity development have tended to be piecemeal through support to selected short-term activities. A lack of awareness of the EPDF outside the WB has meant that the opportunity for widespread engagement in the use of the EPDF to build capacity has been missed. In practice, the FTI has focused mainly on upstream assistance with plan preparation, and paid insufficient attention to the continuing needs for capacity development during implementation.

**S45 On data, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E).** The FTI's agenda included promoting cross-country performance measures, in particular through the IF and with a specific focus on the Primary Completion Rate (PCR). There has been more attention to UPC data, but reporting on IF indicators in general has not improved significantly. At global level there continue to be key data weaknesses (e.g. in the enumeration of out-of-school children, and in data on public expenditure for education) where the FTI could have advocated for improvements. Only a small portion of CF grants has been used in some countries for activities to strengthen data reporting and use. The EPDF supported numerous activities to increase data coverage and use, but overall its activities appear fragmented given the bigger data gap issues.

**S46** The envisaged strengthening of ESPs at country level to include monitoring and evaluation and annual targets for measuring progress has only partially taken place. Moreover, evidence from the country case studies shows that progress in using data for planning has remained limited, that the FTI's contribution to such progress has been minor, and that too often donors themselves remain the principal audience for any analyses of the data.

**S47** The anticipated monitoring by the FTI Secretariat of the country-level performance of all partners has been very weak. Countries themselves have not systematically set and reported against targets based on the IF, and donors have not made monitorable commitments about their own performance.

*The FTI is viewed predominantly as a source of funding, with less attention to its wider agenda*

**S48** The FTI espouses a strong aid effectiveness agenda, and is designed to address policy, capacity and data gaps, as well as finance. However, at country level, the FTI is predominantly viewed as another funding source, not only by partner countries and civil society, but also by donors.

*The FTI's aid effectiveness agenda has not been strongly delivered in practice*

**S49** In spite of the FTI's global advocacy of the Paris Declaration principles and some country-level gains, delivery of the aid effectiveness agenda at country level has been disappointing. Poor communication of the FTI's aid effectiveness aspirations (both by the Secretariat and by donor headquarters) has meant that the FTI's aid effectiveness agenda is not understood at country level as well as it should be. In many cases the FTI is seen too narrowly in terms of opportunities for funding from the CF, while in turn the CF is often perceived as a financing window of the WB.

**S50** A lack of clarity about FTI procedures (partly reflecting its hurried start and continual adjustments) has resulted in high transaction costs. In a number of countries with existing ESPs, parallel plans were developed for the FTI and misunderstandings about the IF meant extra work. Adopting the most aligned aid modality has often been difficult because of the

WB's limited flexibility and a heavy reliance on the WB as the supervising entity in FTI countries. More fundamentally, there has been limited mutual accountability, poor monitoring of the FTI "compact", and insufficient linking up with national poverty reduction strategies. In practice therefore, the FTI has tended to reflect existing patterns in aid management, rather than galvanising significant departures from "business as usual".

#### **Conclusion 4 FTI has considerable strengths...**

S51 The FTI nevertheless has important strengths. These include the strong involvement of a broad coalition of OECD DAC donors (though the number of donors providing significant financial support for its activities remains very limited) as well as its willingness to learn from experience, to be self-critical and to adapt.

S52 In the area of governance in particular, the FTI has shown willingness and commitment to reform. Progress has been made in strengthening the FTI's governance both at global and country levels. Many (though not all) of the issues highlighted in the first external review of the FTI in 2005 have been reflected in subsequent governance changes. The FTI today includes better representation of its various constituencies in decision-making, its governance structures have been streamlined, the dominant role of the WB has been somewhat modified, and country processes have been clarified.

S53 Many of the FTI's original design principles and insights remain pertinent. These include: the principle of country ownership; the importance of coherent sector policies and plans; the need to address the dimensions of policy, data and capacity as well as finance; the need for more effective aid and the recognition that business as usual will not suffice – education especially needs more predictable aid, often extending to the funding of recurrent costs; the need for more relevant and efficient modalities, while education plans and budgets need to be linked to national level – hence the importance of linking ESPs with overall poverty reduction strategies; the concept of partnership and of results-focused reciprocal commitments between governments and donors (the "compact").

#### **Conclusion 5 ... but the FTI also has serious weaknesses**

S54 The FTI has weaknesses in design (explained in part by its hasty beginning and the compromises necessitated by the diverse nature of the partnership); in implementation; in governance and management; and in monitoring and evaluation.

##### *In terms of design*

S55 The tensions surrounding the FTI's initial launch and design have persisted, and the FTI has continually had to balance forces pulling it in different directions. There have been tensions between:

- (a) The pilot approach to prove the effectiveness of the good practices embodied in the Indicative Framework, versus a more inclusive and ambitious approach which placed more emphasis on achieving the MDGs and EFA goals, thus seeking to recruit more countries more rapidly into the partnership.
- (b) "Needs"-based versus "performance"-based support – i.e. should support go to those countries that are in greatest need, or to those that have demonstrated that they meet key conditions which will allow them to meet their EFA goals? This issue has come to the fore in the FTI's discussion of how to deal with "fragile states" (with concern expressed on some fronts about the risk of devaluing FTI's "gold standard" of ESP endorsement).

- (c) Addressing the "finance gap" versus other gaps (capacity, planning, monitoring and evaluation, etc.), and hence the extent to which the FTI should be judged by its achievements in resource mobilisation.
- (d) Specific targets relating to primary education versus wider objectives of supporting EFA and education sector planning as a whole.

S56 The tensions inherent within the FTI come particularly from the different agendas and aspirations of the various donor partners involved. The FTI has had to move forward cautiously in order to keep a broad donor coalition together. Especially because of the quest for consensus decisions, this has often resulted in long negotiations marring the FTI's operational effectiveness and diluting some of the FTI's original intentions.

S57 The evaluation finds that the FTI's design has in practice:

- (a) Placed too much weight on the Indicative Framework (both as a guide to policy and as a means of judging the credibility of plans). The Indicative Framework is not such a robust set of benchmarks as originally portrayed. It was right to be flexible in its use, but this has left a gap between the way the FTI is portrayed to work and the way that it actually does.
- (b) Put too strong an emphasis on a "gold standard" being applied to the ESPs which the FTI endorses. This has gone hand-in-hand with too much emphasis on a one-off endorsement, rather than a continuing relationship of working alongside government through successive cycles of planning and implementation. In turn, this has hindered the adoption of a coherent strategy for addressing the needs of fragile states. (As noted below, the "Progressive Framework" approach that has been developed specifically for "fragile states" could usefully be applied more widely.)
- (c) Placed unrealistic expectations on education donor groups at country level, and particularly their role in supporting country processes and in mobilising resources.
- (d) Applied the concepts of the four 'gaps' too simplistically:
  - The "financing gap" is a problematic concept and has been used inconsistently. It has become a matter of negotiation, and has sometimes distorted the realism of country plans. Its use in influencing CF allocations has lacked coherence and transparency.
  - The "capacity gap" is too static a concept and in practice too focused on planning rather than implementation and service delivery. Indeed the upstream focus on planning rather than downstream on service delivery is a more general concern.
  - Emphasis on missing data should have been balanced by more attention being paid to flaws in the quality of data available, and the difficulties of addressing the "data gap" in terms of using evidence as a basis for policy making.
  - As already explained, there was too much emphasis on the Indicative Framework as the remedy for a "policy gap", and insufficient attention to ensuring that endorsed plans comprehensively address the other gaps.

#### *In terms of implementation*

S58 There have also been considerable weaknesses in implementation, with important aspects of the original design not carried through.

S59 The FTI has been (and despite some modifications still is) an unbalanced partnership. Although described from the outset as a partnership and a compact, it was a

donor initiative, with very little involvement of partner countries in its design, and it has remained more a donor collaboration than a genuine partnership. Partner countries, in particular, still have a very limited role and are not involved in financial decisions.

S60 In its implementation the FTI has been too dependent on the World Bank. The Bank continues to play several roles within the partnership. It hosts the Secretariat of the FTI, and the Head of the Secretariat is answerable to both the FTI Steering Committee (Board) and to WB line management. The WB has also acted as a trustee for the three trust funds (the CF, the EPDF and also the Trust Fund which funds the Secretariat itself). It manages the EPDF and acts as the default "supervising entity" for the CF. The WB is obliged to exercise its functions in accordance with its own rules and regulations; in this context, much criticism of the WB has been unfair. The WB remains vitally important to the FTI. Nevertheless, concerns around these multiple roles – with the lack of a clear demarcation between the FTI and the WB, leading to ambiguity and potential conflicts of interest – are still evident. Efforts to make the partnership more balanced – including the recent reforms in governance – have not adequately addressed these points.

S61 Implementation at country level has been very variable. In a number of countries FTI's intervention has focused strongly on the endorsement process and been very weak after this. Changing rules and unclear processes (and hence unclear communication from the FTI Secretariat), have led to confusion and high transaction costs. At country level, the lead donors have been less effective than expected as a communication channel to government and to other local representatives. Country implementation has also been affected by the lack of monitoring, leaving the FTI with insufficient information to adjust its actions.

#### *In terms of governance and management*

S62 In spite of the positive commitment to reform noted above, **governance reform** has been inordinately time-consuming, underscoring the lack of efficiency in governance processes, and some key issues are yet to be adequately addressed. Decisions have been taken in an ad hoc fashion without adequate consideration of their strategic implications and implementation requirements (the series of decisions to broaden the scope of the partnership and the role of the Catalytic Fund are the most obvious examples).

S63 At the level of **management**, the concept of a 'light touch' and of a 'lean' secretariat was never reconciled with the extensive roles the Secretariat was required to perform if the FTI was to carry through effectively the design that was embodied in the FTI Framework. The county studies document the inefficiency and poor communications that have resulted. As a consequence, the FTI's decision-making procedures and criteria have often been opaque, undermining its principle of transparency as well as its credibility.

#### *In monitoring and feedback*

S64 The FTI did not establish a proper results-oriented M&E framework at the outset, and so it has not been able adequately to monitor country and global level processes. Basic management monitoring systems were not set up to establish whether FTI was achieving the inputs, let alone the outputs that its "business plan" required. The FTI has blurred the distinction between objective monitoring and advocacy. Weaknesses in monitoring have prevented the FTI from recognising key differences between FTI aspirations and the reality (particularly the gap between its aspirations as a global partnership and the reality of country-level implementation).

**Conclusion 6      Thus, the FTI has remained a weak partnership, with weak accountability, and has not delivered the "compact" to which it refers**

S65      The failure to record or monitor donor commitments at country level has meant that there has been, in practice, no genuine country-level compact. Nor has there been any systematic monitoring of donor commitments to the compact at global level. Accountability has remained asymmetrical. The FTI began as a donor initiative and has essentially remained one, with partner countries having only a limited voice.

**Conclusion 7      The FTI has expanded its definition of client countries (both generally and for the CF), but has not adapted its design to match**

S66      The FTI is now in principle accessible to all low-income IDA countries, but this has implications for design and for scale that have not been fully addressed:

- (a) The decision to expand to all IDA countries (like the earlier decision to expand the initial list of invitees) was taken without proper consideration of, and provisions for, the management and financial implications that would follow (notably the much greater demands on the Secretariat and potentially on the CF).
- (b) Concerning *large/federal countries*: The FTI has put these on the agenda and some have benefited from EPDF support; but the FTI has never devoted enough attention to the special design issues of working in such states. The FTI's approach would need to be customised separately for each of the "analytical fast track" countries (though not all would necessarily be interested in full engagement with the FTI).
- (c) Concerning *fragile states*: a long process of designing an approach to accommodate fragile states has still not reached fruition. The FTI has sought to incorporate a "transition fund" to cater for fragile states within the overall FTI process, but this has yet to be established. A well-thought-out "progressive framework" for engaging with fragile states has been developed but not yet applied.

**Conclusion 8      On the balance between UPC and other EFA targets, FTI's "offering" has become increasingly broad over time. There are good reasons for this, but the FTI has not yet properly addressed the strategic implications**

S67      Highlighting the importance of primary education (as the MDGs did) was a simple way of galvanising support. In practice, the FTI's scope has been broader, but there are unresolved issues about reconciling a sector-wide plan with a primary education specific concentration of support and about achieving an appropriate balance amongst all the EFA objectives.

S68      The evaluation's case studies did not find evidence that the FTI was actually diverting resources from other EFA objectives. (In some cases there was direct FTI support to other components of EFA, or broad support to a sector programme that extended beyond primary.) However, there is a case that other EFA goals (such as adult literacy) have tended to be neglected by governments and donors alike, and that the FTI has not challenged this. A narrow focus on primary education may be less appropriate in the context of fragile states (where secondary education and adult learning may have an important role in addressing causes of fragility). And the more success there is in expanding primary education, the greater the pressure on other levels of the education system (as manifested in the increased political attention to secondary education in several of the case study countries). However, discussions within the FTI about expanding its scope have not adequately addressed the resource implications of doing so.

## Recommendations

### Perspective on the evaluation's recommendations

S69 The FTI is at a cross-roads. The remaining challenges of EFA, including the goal of universal primary education for all, are huge, and deserve a high place on the international agenda. The FTI itself has some notable accomplishments but also has some fundamental shortcomings which will need to be addressed.

S70 The FTI is in the midst of a period of reform. The evaluation's judgement is that reform has not yet been taken far enough. The evaluation team also considers that a reformed FTI would be a much better option than seeking to compensate for FTI's shortcomings by establishing a new global fund for education. Frustrations with the FTI have led to an increasingly vocal lobby for such a fund but this risks fragmenting the global effort, and could easily replicate the design weaknesses from which the FTI has suffered.

S71 The evaluation's recommendations are pitched at the strategic level, and need to be taken as a whole. They call for a thorough redesign and reinvigoration of the FTI, in which the FTI needs to be much clearer about the realistic mechanisms through which its objectives can be achieved, and about matching its resources to its objectives.

### Principal recommendations

#### *The FTI<sup>2</sup> as a partnership*

S72 The FTI should be made into a much stronger partnership. This will require:

- (a) Much stronger partner country representation, including participation in financial decisions.
- (b) Reducing dependence on the World Bank, disentangling the different WB roles and guarding against conflicts of interest.
- (c) Enhancing accountability for donors as well as governments. All partners should be clearly committed to certain principles and obligations as members and the partnership should monitor whether these are met. In the case of donors, it should include a commitment to mobilise resources with agreed mechanisms for doing so.
- (d) On the donor side, making influence proportional to donors' contributions to the partnership (which include, but are not limited to, contributions to the FTI trust funds).
- (e) Strengthening key governance structures – in particular the Local Education Groups and Local Donor Groups for the critical role which they play – and ensuring that country level processes have adequate technical support.

S73 The FTI Secretariat needs to be greatly strengthened. It needs to be operationally independent of the WB and seen as such. This does not exclude being "hosted" by the WB, provided its functions are adequately "firewalled" in operational terms.

#### *The scope and configuration of the partnership's activities*

S74 *Which education goals?* Decisions about which EFA goals and which education sub-sectors the FTI should support, and the extent to which such support should be financial or merely technical, must be taken carefully in the light of resources available and the commitments of partners. There is a strong case for more explicitly expanding FTI's focus

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<sup>2</sup> Both the FTI and the Catalytic Fund should be re-branded with names that better express their purpose. To avoid confusion, the existing names are used in the recommendations.

beyond UPC, but there will be little benefit in doing so unless the financial implications are factored in. In particular, it would be counterproductive to expand the focus of the Catalytic Fund unless there is a commensurate increase in its resources.

S75 *What types of support?* Support provided through the FTI should be both financial and technical and support for capacity development should not be separate from other financial support; i.e. the EPDF component should in future be much more closely integrated with the CF component. Funds for capacity development – whether for ‘endorsement’ or for programme implementation – should be continuous, predictable, and probably even more long-term than funds for other purposes. At the same time, countries accessing technical support through the FTI should have a choice of providers, and country-level ownership and management of support to capacity development should mirror the strengthening of partners’ voice at global level.

S76 *For which countries?* FTI should be open to all IDA-eligible countries as already agreed, but it must not be assumed that it will be in the interests of all IDA countries to seek financial (CF) support from the partnership. However, this is a decisive move away from the initial idea of focusing on "best performers", and requires a corresponding change in the paradigm for eligibility.

S77 *With what entry requirements?* The original paradigm was a "credible plan" based on the criteria of the Indicative Framework. The evaluation found that the idea of a "gold standard" based on the Indicative Framework is an illusion. Indeed, the idea of a one-off entry threshold is in itself unhelpful. The underlying principles of the Progressive Framework should be applied to all. In this way, entry to the FTI "club" would not be based on a one-off "threshold" but linked to a credible commitment to improve, with support tailored to circumstances, and renewed according to accomplishments.

S78 This approach has corollaries. “Fragile states” should not be seen as a separate category. In reality there is always a continuum of "fragility" with states moving back and forth. There needs to be one common process that all countries follow, but with support tailored to circumstances. This approach would provide a "one-stop shop" with flexible facilities, and avoid the fragmentation of activities into separate funds with different rules and processes. To maintain flexibility the approach needs to be protected from the present rigidity of WB project procedures.

#### *Operation of the Catalytic Fund*

S79 The CF should do things that would not happen in its absence. It should build on the potential strengths of a global pooled funding mechanism, while seeking to avoid the drawbacks that can be associated with vertical funds. It should be made much more effective in leveraging additional resources for basic education, and in enhancing aid effectiveness, by:

- (a) Prioritising funding for countries which lose out because of the vagaries of how bilateral agencies allocate their aid.
- (b) Making multi-year commitments with an expectation that countries would be able to draw on the Fund for the necessary length of time as long as they were showing improvement (i.e. a presumption that funding would be long term).
- (c) Providing funds in ways which promote and reward successful planning, policy and performance at country level; and which encourage progress in country-level coordination, harmonisation and alignment.
- (d) Building parallel donor commitments on ESP finance into Fund approval and monitoring procedures, in order to reinforce accountability of donor commitments and ensure the additionality of CF support.

- (e) Engaging with Ministries of Finance, and pursuing the original objective of ensuring that education sector plans and budgets are strongly anchored in national budgets and plans.
- (f) Adopting key measures aimed at ensuring greater transparency with: clearer eligibility and allocation criteria; allocation decisions being made by an independent panel rather than a donor committee; a defined procedure of funding rounds as well as advance indications of funding amounts potentially available; partner countries not being excluded from the governance of the funds; transparent feedback on all country applications, including those that are rejected; and a transparent procedure to appeal decisions.
- (g) Committing to a stronger default requirement on the use of most aligned modalities, including use of sector budget support and maximum use of country systems.
- (h) Being open to a variety of implementing channels, with no assumption that the WB is the default supervising entity, and encouraging other agencies to compete for the management of the funds.
- (i) Ensuring complementarity with other funds:
  - domestic funds – by including government commitments on public expenditure for basic education as part of the grant agreement, with the Ministry of Finance as a signatory;
  - external funds – by requiring information on parallel commitments by other donors to be submitted as part of the application, and reported on as part of the disbursement process;
  - encouraging use of the fund as part of joint financing agreements with specific commitments from other donors;
  - using funds to buy down IDA credits to grant level (this would reduce the risk of the WB and Ministries of Finance allowing the CF grant to displace IDA credits, and increase the likelihood of the WB remaining engaged in basic education).

### *Monitoring and evaluation*

S80 A crucial part of the redesign of the FTI must be to devise a framework, agreed to and owned by all partners, for monitoring and evaluating the FTI's own activities. This must involve a clear understanding about the making and monitoring of commitments by all partners (the "compact"), at both country and global level.

### *Implementation of recommendations*

S81 There have been many piecemeal changes to the FTI over the years. In early discussion of the evaluation's findings, the need now to adopt a more comprehensive approach has been recognised. This should involve redrafting the FTI framework document in a way that obviates the need for separate guidelines on governance, on country-level processes and on preferred aid modalities. A practical strategy and framework for monitoring and accountability within the partnership should be described in the new framework document, to which partners should explicitly sign up.

S82 Hitherto, hasty design dominated by donors has undermined the credibility of FTI as a partnership, and has resulted in an architecture that has not worked well. It is vital that all stakeholders are involved in the redesign of the FTI towards a more genuine and effective partnership. This evaluation therefore strongly recommends using this draft report as the basis for a thorough discussion among the partnership. The imminent replenishment process should be used as a (vitaly important) holding operation to allow the FTI to be redesigned and reinvigorated.