

EFA FTI Board of Directors management response to the Evaluation

4 December 2009

The FTI Board of Directors welcomes the evaluation report which it had commissioned as an external mid-term evaluation halfway to the ‘deadline’ of the Millennium Development Goals of 2015.

While the report provides recognition of what the Education for All – Fast Track Initiative (EFA FTI) has achieved, it concludes that the FTI has fallen well short of its goals, and needs to engage a robust process of reform in order to reach its potential in the future. We note one of the main conclusions of the report, that “the world needs a better FTI not a new global fund”. The evaluation itself, with its recommendations based on successes and failures to date, is an important part of building that better FTI.

In sum, the FTI’s main accomplishments:

- The evaluation emphasizes that creating EFA FTI was the right decision: a broad partnership for addressing basic education was and remains critical.
- The report notes that FTI-endorsed countries have performed better than non-endorsed countries: the number of children enrolled in schools in African FTI countries increased 64% between 2000 and 2007, which is double the increase of non-FTI countries. Furthermore, FTI-supported countries have increased their own financing for education significantly faster than the rate of growth of their economies ,
- The evaluation also pointed to the role of the FTI as a forum on how to make aid for education more effective. The FTI had been identified in previous studies of global programs of the World Bank, OECD and UN as the one closest to the broadly accepted principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of 2005. The report notes that FTI has reinforced the focus of donors on supporting country-owned plans and processes. But as we strive to increase aid effectiveness, we welcome the recommendations of the evaluation on how to do so. The report’s recommendations are consistent with several reforms already under way.
- Although FTI’s main multi-donor trust fund, the Catalytic Fund, has allocated around US\$ 1.6 billion in support of FTI endorsed national education plans over the past years, we also agree with the finding that financing for these plans, be it bilaterally or through the Catalytic Fund, has fallen far short of needs. The recommendations of the evaluation will help us do better on a series of important initiatives under way to increase effectiveness and financing – ultimately necessary to get more children into school and provide them with a quality education.

On attributing progress to EFA – FTI:

The Board believes that EFA FTI has contributed to the climate in FTI-endorsed countries in which much progress with regard to educational outcomes, domestic financing and aid effectiveness was possible.

It recognizes at the same time that it is statistically difficult to attribute that progress to specific interventions financed for example by FTI's Catalytic Fund. More specifically:

- Higher numbers of children enrolled in school in FTI countries: the evaluation cautions that this should not be taken entirely as evidence of FTI's effectiveness, since FTI selects better performers for endorsement. This is consistent with the emphasis in the FTI's mandate of support for sound country-owned basic education sector plans.
- Increased domestic financing for basic education: the evaluation judges the impact of FTI on this trend to be modest, as it is mainly attributed to the growth in GDP of the countries.

Regarding the report's main recommendations, including some calls for robust changes:

Reforms and change: The Board of Directors will consider the recommendations of the evaluation very seriously and set in motion a process of reform to be kick-started with a special meeting of the Board in early 2010. It would like to recognize that over the course of 2009, several governance changes enabling more transparent, strategic and inclusive decision-making within the Partnership have already been undertaken. Future reforms should include the streamlining of the trust fund architecture, work on the FTI's response to fragile and post-conflict countries, innovative approaches to supporting capacity development, and reviewing the roles of the main stakeholders.

Donor financing: A central finding of the report is that financing for basic education in low-income countries as a whole has fallen far below what is needed. In April 2009 we announced the launch of a campaign to replenish FTI trust funds and to substantially increase donor support for basic education overall. This is an opportunity for donors, civil society, and developing countries to join forces for the benefit of education. The FTI funding mobilization campaign will be coordinated with other initiatives in support of financing Education for All, including the Class of 2015 and the One Goal campaign. We agree with the evaluation that the replenishment needs to reach out to a broader circle of funders, including other donor countries such as the US, newly emerging donor countries, foundations, and the private sector and to draw on innovative financing sources.

FTI's Mission: The evaluation rightly calls for EFA FTI to put more emphasis on its initial goals and principles. As the evaluation indicates, this means closer adherence by all donors to the principles of support for country "owned" programs of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. This includes assuring that FTI plays a catalytic role for other financing and that aid for basic education as a whole is provided in a manner that is predictable and aligned with national plans. We recognise that EFA FTI can play a much stronger role at country level in ensuring that funding through different channels works better for education outcomes. We also need greater "mutual accountability" of donors as well as developing countries for meeting commitments and close monitoring of the quantity and quality of aid and of progress toward agreed education goals.

Governance and management: The evaluation makes constructive recommendations on accelerating recent progress in moving toward inclusion of the FTI’s “trust funds” within a revised governance and management structure. Continued efforts will be taken to improve the operational effectiveness of the trust fund support, including more aligned modalities and quicker disbursements. The evaluation also rightly calls for a greater voice for developing countries, including on financing decisions. We will be consulting the FTI partnership on these important recommendations.

Fragile States: We agree with the evaluation that the EFA goals are unattainable without more attention to fragile and conflict-affected states and on the importance of integrating support for them into the mainstream of the FTI. A fund to support fragile and post-conflict states financially under the EFA FTI umbrella is currently under development.

The Relationship between the World Bank and the FTI: We agree with the evaluation that greater attention to the division of responsibility between the World Bank and the FTI partnership would be beneficial to all parties, and we note that some steps have already been taken in this direction, including expansion of the supervising entity role beyond the World Bank. Further, the Bank will no longer be chairing the FTI Trust Fund Committees.

Scope of FTI: The evaluation correctly observes that FTI is open to all low-income countries¹, i.e. some 80 countries around the world as well as in practice to a broader interpretation of support to basic education (including e.g. early childhood development and teacher training), but without fully addressing the design and scale implications. The financing needs of this extensive group of potential recipient countries are much larger than the initial small group of best performers EFA FTI was addressing in the first years. Responding to the diversified needs of these countries requires the FTI to address the consequent design and scale implications. We are giving this issue, and its implications for the FTI resource mobilization, urgent attention.

¹ As classified by the World Bank’s International Development Association (IDA).