



Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark



MEDIA ADVISORY

Education Fast Track brings hundreds of specialists to Copenhagen working to get children into school in the most effective and sustainable way

COPENHAGEN, 17 April 2009 - The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA FTI) will welcome two hundred education and development specialists from low-income countries, donor countries, UN agencies and civil society organizations to Copenhagen on April 20 – 21 for the EFA FTI's biennial partnership meeting. The EFA – FTI is an international partnership established in 2002 to help achieve universal primary education. The two-day meeting will allow education and development specialists to discuss solutions for getting millions of out-of-school children around the world into classrooms as effectively as possible, while improving the quality of learning.

“The past decade has seen unprecedented gains in access to education in developing countries and the EFA FTI has contributed to this progress”, says Ulla Tørnæs, Minister for Development Cooperation of Denmark and currently co-chair of the EFA FTI. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, the countries supported by the EFA - FTI saw a net gain of 15 million primary school students over a six-year period. Despite the recent progress in enrolling millions of poor children into primary school, many low-income countries are unable to obtain adequate financing to implement their national education plans. The Education for All Fast Track Initiative, a global partnership that currently supports the education programs in 37 developing countries, wants to help around 18 million more children who are out of school today by 2010. “Many of these children are hard to reach; children in rural and remote areas, in (post-) conflict situations, children with disabilities or affected by HIV / Aids”, adds Minister Tørnæs. “Once in school, local governments and their international partners have to make sure that children learn adequate skills.”

Discussions at the two-day conference will focus on three themes: 1) hard-to-reach children, 2) the quality of learning, and 3) resource mobilization and aid effectiveness. These policy themes directly relate to the strategies necessary to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education. The conference will nurture a dynamic interaction between politicians, Ministers of Development and Education with civil society members and policy makers from the North as well as the South.

The EFA FTI partnership meeting will focus on providing solutions for existing problems, but will also highlight successes. “The EFA FTI partnership has been praised by the international community as a good model for aid effectiveness and donor harmonization. Compared to other global initiatives, EFA-FTI works on the basis of partner countries' own development and education priorities. It is more aligned with the countries' own systems, thus contributing to strengthening national capacities and

Website: www.education-fast-track.org

Media contacts: Angela Bekkers, EFA FTI Secretariat, cell: +1 202 3613459, email: Abekkers@educationfasttrack.org
Kristian Edinger, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark, tel: +45 33 92 02 19, email: kriedi@um.dk



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reinforcing long term sustainability of education systems”, says Elisabetta Belloni, Director General for Development Cooperation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who jointly with Denmark chairs the EFA FTI this year.

A new publication entitled ‘Sounds from the classroom’ will be launched focusing on how basic education programs supported by EFA FTI have impacted the lives of children, parents and communities. It includes the story of a nine-year old girl from Madagascar who will be the first of her family’s eight children going beyond fifth grade and hopes to continue to high school. It describes a grade two student of an elementary school in Accra, Ghana who loves to come to school everyday to learn and eat her bowl of boiled ‘yam and kontomire’ which keeps her going for the whole day. It is also portrays a herder in Mongolia’s remote steppe who takes his young son to a mobile pre-school by horseback – something that was unimaginable when he was a child.

The two-day partnership meeting will be held back-to- back with FTI’s Steering Committee and trust fund meetings where policy decisions of a more technical nature will be taken. The coming months will be of great importance to the Education for All Fast Track Initiative as it launches a resource mobilization effort and establishes a special fund to support education in fragile states. The immediate financing needs of the EFA FTI trust funds are estimated at US\$ 1.2 billion for 2009 - 2010.

“These are the financing needs of countries with ambitious but credible national education plans that have received the international ‘seal of approval’ through FTI” says Joy Phumaphi, Vice-President for Human Development at the World Bank, one of the founding partners of EFA FTI. „The financing needs sound like a modest figure when measured against the scale of the economic rescue packages we hear about every day. With everyone pulling together, Education for All can become a reality.”

More information:

The partnership meeting is open to the media. For more information, please visit the EFA FTI website: <http://www.education-fast-track.org> or contact Angela Bekkers of the EFA FTI Secretariat, cell: +1 202 3613459, email: Abekkers@educationfasttrack.org or Kristian Edinger of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, tel: +45 33 92 02 19, email: kriedi@um.dk

About EFA FTI:

The Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA FTI) was launched in 2002 as a global partnership between developing countries, donor countries and multilateral organizations including the World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO to ensure accelerated progress towards the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015. All low-income countries that demonstrate a serious commitment towards achieving the education MDG can receive support from FTI. Currently, the national education strategies of 37 low-income countries, of which 22 in Sub-Saharan Africa, are endorsed by the EFA FTI partnership. Financial support can come from FTI’s Catalytic Fund, a

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multilateral fund sponsored by 17 donor countries with a total of US\$ 1.5 billion in commitments (2003 – 2009). The EFA FTI Secretariat is hosted by the World Bank.

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