

## **More Foreign Aid for Education Ministry**

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The director of the World Bank office in Mozambique, Michael Baxter, announced in Maputo on Monday that donors are granting a further 79 million US dollars to finance the country's Education Strategic Plan for 2008/2009.

Addressing a Maputo press conference, Baxter said the steering committee of the "Catalytic Fund for Mozambique" of the **Education For All/ Fast Track Initiative (EFA/FTI)** had agreed to provide this sum at a meeting in Bonn, Germany on 23 May.

The Catalytic Fund is sponsored by all the donors active in the Mozambican education sector, and the fund is managed by the World Bank. The money is in addition to the funds already pledged by these donors for Mozambican education in the 2008/09 period.

"These funds", Baxter said, "come from the promise made by the international partners during the World Conference on Education for All, held in Dakar in 2000, where it was agreed that "no country seriously committed to education for all would be prejudiced in its efforts for lack of funds".

The new financing, Baxter added, "confirms the trust of Mozambique's foreign partners in the political will of the Mozambican government, and in the capacity of the Ministry of Education to strengthen its administrative structure, in order to implement its strategic plan efficiently and effectively".

The additional resources, he continued, would give the Ministry the chance to step up school construction, the distribution of text books, the training of new teachers, and implementation of its gender and HIV/AIDS strategies.

Education Minister Aires Aly told the gathering that this additional money covers the deficit in funding the Education Strategic Plan.

The complete plan covers the period 2006-2011, and was endorsed by the donors, and by representatives of Mozambican civil society, in June 2006. The new pledge comes on top of foreign funding already granted for 2008 of 70 million dollars.

The increase in funding for education, said Aly, "forces us to work harder and poses new challenges".

"We will have to speed up our teacher training programmes, strengthen Direct Support to Schools, and extend the school books programme to the secondary level", he said. Currently this programme, whereby school books are distributed free of charge, only covers primary education.

Aly added that with this money the government will also speed up the school building programme, and provide the new schools with all the necessary equipment.

"It is our duty to use these funds effectively, so as to bring into education those children who are still outside school, and to improve the quality of our education", declared the minister.

The Fast Track Initiative is based on mutual commitments between donors and developing countries, aimed at helping the latter attain the Millennium Development Goals that include ensuring that all children can have a complete primary education by 2015.