

PRESS RELEASE

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The Education for All - Fast Track Initiative helping 1 million out-of-school children into the classroom with new financing

Rome, 6 November 2009 – The Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA FTI) announced at its donor meeting in Rome that US\$153.5 million is granted to Lesotho, Nepal and Tajikistan to support their programs to enroll children into school, have them complete a primary education and improve the quality of learning. The new funding will help to address the needs of approximately 1 million out-of-school children living in these countries.

The grants come from the EFA FTI’s Catalytic Fund, a multilateral fund sponsored by 18 donors. It helps low-income countries that have FTI-endorsed national education strategies to scale-up their education investments.

Nepal is granted US\$120 million for the implementation of the School Sector Reform Plan. With an annual per capita income of about US\$ 470 in 2008, Nepal is among the poorest countries in South Asia. Thirty percent of its children drop out of primary grades and hundreds of thousands of children do not attend school at all. The national education plan aims to address this by bringing the hardest to reach children into schools and reducing the financial burden on communities. The grant will also finance multi-lingual teaching and establish teachers’ compensation grants to help the decentralization of teacher hiring.

Lesotho receives US\$20 million in support of its Medium-Term Education Sector Plan which seeks to expand access to early childhood care and ensures that all children have the opportunity to complete a good quality primary education. The program will help provide a safe learning environment for all children and enhance school readiness. Furthermore, the program intends to attract qualified teachers where they are most needed.

A grant of US\$13.5 million is approved for Tajikistan to support the National Strategy for Education Development. Tajikistan is a low-income country with extensive needs in basic education, despite the government’s strong commitment to Education for All. The grant will help build and rehabilitate schools and provide basic school materials to over 60,000 students. Supplementary reading materials will be provided to roughly one quarter of the country’s schools. The grant will also be used to provide extra training to 20,000 teachers every year.

“I congratulate the donors in the FTI Catalytic Fund Committee for granting over US\$150 million to countries in three regions -- Africa, South Asia, and Central Asia -- to scale up the implementation of their plans to achieve the education for all targets,” says Robin Horn, World Bank Sector Manager for Education and Chair of the Catalytic Fund Committee. “What is especially significant about these country programs is that they are fully supported by the remarkably strong collaboration between government and local development partners, which is the hallmark of the EFA FTI Partnership.”

Since its creation in 2002, EFA FTI has grown steadily to become a dynamic global partnership that has endorsed the education sector plans of 39 low-income countries around the world, including 23 in Sub-Saharan Africa. To date, EFA FTI has approved approximately US\$1.6 billion from the FTI Catalytic Fund to support the national education plans of partner countries financially.

For more information, please visit: www.educationfasttrack.org

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 such as the World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO. Its goal is to ensure accelerated progress towards universal primary education by 2015. All low-income countries that demonstrate commitment towards achieving the education MDG can receive support from FTI.
