

EFA FTI Equity and Inclusion Tool

Report of the Piloting Process

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Acronyms

CFS	Child Friendly Schools
CSO	Civil society Organisation
CSR	Country Status Report
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPDF	Education Programme Development fund
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IATT	Inter-Agency Task Team
IEC	Internal Efficiency Coefficient
JTR	Joint Technical Review
LEG	Local Education Group
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MoESYP	Ministry of Education, Science and Youth Policy
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
NESP	National Education Sector Plan
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PCR	Primary Completion Rate
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
SEN	Special Education Needs
SMC	School Management Committee
SRA	Situation-Response Analysis
SWOT	Strength/Weakness/Opportunity/Threat
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNGEI	United Nations Girls Education Initiative

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Executive Summary

1. This report presents the main findings of three country pilot exercises to field test the draft Equity and Inclusion Tool which had been developed under the leadership of the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI), the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Education (IATT) and the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI) Secretariat to improve the quality of education sector plans being prepared in conjunction with the FTI partnership. The intended users of the tool include national authorities responsible for preparing or revising education sector plans, civil society organisations and local development partners.
2. The tool that was piloted was a simplified version of a more elaborate toolkit that had been prepared in 2008. The original toolkit was deemed to be too complex and revisions were made in format and content to make it more user-friendly
3. The piloting took place in the Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho and Malawi during the period April to July 2009. These countries were selected following a process whereby more than 20 countries were invited to participate. The piloting was planned to take place in varying contexts with different levels of support. Kyrgyz republic and Lesotho have FTI endorsed sector plans and are in the process of revising these. Malawi is in the process of preparing its plan for appraisal. Each process was different in scope, process and duration. The exercise in the Kyrgyz Republic was the most comprehensive and an evaluation report was submitted by the Local Education Group (LEG). In Lesotho, the piloting took place within the Joint Technical Review (JTR) workshop process. In Malawi, which is in the process of plan preparation, piloting took place in the context of a specific 2-day workshop. The latter two countries were provided with consultancy assistance to pilot the tool.
4. The tool has considerable promise. While there were significant differences in piloting procedures, the findings of the three processes were broadly consistent. The tool was generally well received in all three countries. It provides a means of undertaking a comprehensive assessment of equity-related issues which is important for planning interventions to address the problems identified. There was broad endorsement on the usefulness and relevance of a tool that focused on issues of equity and inclusion. The question format was welcomed. Some frustration was expressed that the tool had not been available much earlier in the planning cycle. While feedback from participants was largely positive, it also highlighted the need for a number of revisions to simplify the structure as well as to improve the technical content and guidance. Specific recommendations to improve the tool were received in all three pilot contexts and these have been used to revise the tool.
5. The toolkit has been revised in the light of feedback received. This represents more of a fine-tuning exercise than a radical revision of approach. In particular, the three column format should be changed as it appears complex to the user. This can be achieved by separating the questions concerning education sector stock-taking and those relevant to plan preparation. These can be placed in different sections of the tool which should make it easier to use (See annex 2);
6. The tool appears to have numerous potential uses beyond those intended for undertaking a situation analysis ('stocktaking' in FTI terminology) and plan preparation, review and revision. These include advocacy for equity and inclusion; enhancing stakeholder participation in education planning processes; strengthening inter-departmental and cross government collaboration; and providing a vehicle for policy dialogue between government and development partners.
7. Use of the tool threw up a number of critical issues for education sector planning. These included:
 - The need for a holistic approach to analysing educational equity issues and the lack of a suitable framework or lens this prior to the introduction of the tool. This arises from the multiple deprivations (e.g. gender and disability) that are characteristic of educational disadvantage;

- The value of the availability of a comprehensive stock taking review of sector performance (as in Malawi) to inform dialogue and decision-making. There is a need to develop an evidence-base on the characteristics of effective education sector situation assessments and promote cross-country learning on their preparation and use;
- The need to go beyond national educational statistics and the importance of obtaining and using disaggregated statistical data including by gender, region/district and economic quintile to understand educational inequalities;
- Educational disadvantage is not simply a matter of disadvantaged population groups, it is also a consequence of a lack of rural development and opportunity, which is particularly pronounced in remote areas. In the three pilot countries the disadvantages faced by mountainous communities was particularly pronounced;
- The importance of research evidence of the root causes of school drop out and reviewing the effectiveness of strategies to address these;
- Ongoing difficulties in responding effectively to HIV, both in terms of preventive education and the needs of children living with or affected by HIV;
- Complexities in addressing child labour and the need for a multi-sectoral government response;
- Lack of adequate support for the education of children with disabilities, especially those with severe disabilities;
- The need for more in-depth assessments of specific issues (e.g. in gender, child labour and HIV) where these are key issues;
- The importance of highlighting all relevant policies in the education sector plan and ensuring the plan includes activities to disseminate and implement such policies;
- The importance of the *Child Friendly School* (CFS) concept and the need to set standards for schools in terms of equity and inclusion.

9. This piloting process is not the end point for the development and application of the tool. Its relevance and usefulness have now been established. There is clearly an issue about how the tool is to be rolled out to other countries participating in the FTI. Drawing on lessons learned from piloting, effective use of the tool appears to be dependent on a number of factors. These include:

- Political commitment to address educational inequity. There may be a need to supplement the tool with evidence-based advocacy.;
- Technical capacity in the planning department of the Ministry of Education and related departments to assess and address issues of equity and inclusion. Consideration should be given to linking the tool to technical assistance that is being provided to Ministries of Education for planning;
- Ministry of Education commitment to including civil society participation in education planning and review. There is scope in increase civil society participation to ensure that disadvantaged groups are meaningfully represented in the planning process;
- Development partner commitment to the FTI in general and to address issues of equity and inclusion in particular. This appears to need some strengthening;

- Availability of financial and human resources to support a comprehensive sector stock taking or a Situation-Response Analysis (SRA) to provide evidence for planning-related decision making;
- Tailoring the tool to meet local Ministry of Education requirements. Follow up work could take place in the three pilot countries;
- Combining the use of the tool with other toolkits available to the FTI (on capacity development, HIV, gender, inclusive education etc);
- Capacity to monitor the impact of using the tool on FTI processes and plan outcomes. This is an issue for the FTI Secretariat.

10. The future of the revised tool will likely depend on the commitment of those agencies which have a clear interest in the social dimensions of education sector development including equity and inclusion. Not all agencies in the FTI Partnership have the interest or capacity at country level. To date the most interest in the tool has been demonstrated by Irish Aid, the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF and the future direction of the tool arguably lies with these agencies being able to provide resources for it to be used in country level education sector plan development processes.

11. Recommendations

1. The importance and potential of this new approach to educational equity and inclusion should be widely communicated in the FTI partnership;
2. The revised tool should be reviewed by the FTI Secretariat, UNGEI Secretariat, the UNAIDS IATT on Education and other interested stakeholders. The tool and the results of the piloting process should be presented and discussed at the next FTI partnership meeting in Rome;
3. There should be a process of follow up with the three pilot countries to identify next steps in adopting the tool. This could include adapting the tool to integrate it within existing planning procedures;
4. The revised tool should be introduced to a range of new countries within the framework of the FTI. It would be most useful if the tool could be included at an early stage in processes to undertake a stock-taking analysis and b) preparation of the plan itself. Selection of the countries should rely on demand from the Ministry of Education and the tool should be recommended, but not mandatory for sector plan development.
5. The EPDF should be considered as a means of providing financial support for countries to use the tool in plan preparation, review and revision processes;
6. There remains a need to assess the usefulness of the tool in supporting the appraisal and endorsement process from an equity and inclusion perspective;
7. The roll out of the tool should be accompanied by technical assistance to build technical capacity especially in planning departments of Ministries of Education to better integrate equity and inclusion issues into education sector planning processes;
8. Consideration should be given to providing technical support to Ministries of Education wishing to adapt the tool to meet the requirements of their planning and review processes.
9. There will be value in taking a regional approach to enable cross-country sharing and learning in addressing equity and inclusion in general and applying the tool in particular;

10. Not all development partners have a clear interest or local capacity in equity and inclusion issues. Agencies such as UNICEF, which have a comparative advantage in these policy areas, should be prepared to take the lead in developing the use of the tool in new countries;

11. The FTI Secretariat should consider developing a web page on education equity and inclusion issues and feature the tool.

The Main Report

1. Background

1.1 Purpose and intended users

The intended purpose of the Equity and Inclusion Tool is to improve the quality of education sector plans being prepared in conjunction with the FTI Partnership by supporting ministries of education and other stakeholders to address inclusion of commonly excluded groups. This would be achieved through considering gender, HIV, disability, child labour and other related issues relevant at national level to the development, and financing, of education sector plans. The tool should also be relevant to revisiting existing plans as part of education sector review processes.

The intended users of the tool include: national authorities for their information in preparing or revising education sector plans; local donor groups as they provide support to governments in plan preparation; and donors for appraisal of plans for FTI endorsement, used in conjunction with FTI Framework and Appraisal Guidelines.

1.2 The development of the Equity and Inclusion Tool

The development of a tool to promote equity and inclusion in education sector plans was first discussed at the November 2007 meeting of the Global Advisory Committee (GAC) of the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI, anchored by UNICEF) when a joint working session was held on collaboration for mainstreaming equity and inclusion issues in country-level FTI processes. The meeting was attended by representatives of the UNGEI GAC, the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team on Education (IATT, convened by UNESCO), the Global Task Force on Child Labour and EFA (GTF, convened by ILO), the EFA Flagship on the Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities (convened by UNESCO) and the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI) Secretariat.

The outcome of the meeting was an agreement between the groups to collaborate, under the leadership of UNGEI and the IATT, on the development of a simple, user-friendly tool that would support the better inclusion of excluded groups in education sector plans. The tool development would build on efforts and resources to date and be prepared for the FTI Donors' Technical Meeting in Tokyo in April 2008.

The development of the tool was undertaken by a consultant funded by UNGEI, during February-March 2008, with supervision by UNGEI and the IATT, in conjunction with other Working Group members. The methodology for developing the tool began with a desk review of existing documentation, including reviews, checklists and toolkits developed by the key partners in development of the tool, and other selected sources. Additional consultations were held with Working Group members and other relevant experts. Comments were also sought at the April 2008 IATT on Education meeting in Chiang Mai as well as at the FTI Steering Committee Meeting in Tokyo.

Three tools were developed by the consultant:

- **Tool A.** It focuses on 12 critical questions across the key areas of education sector review planning identified from the documentation review.
- **Tool B.** This was an additional tool designed primarily for use in countries moving towards a more comprehensive approach to equity and inclusion. It included 123 questions organized in 5 sections.
- **Tool C.** A progressive framework was also developed following consultation feedback, as a resource for evaluating a country's progress on the trajectory towards equity and inclusion.

1.3 The Strategy for piloting, revising and finalizing the Equity and inclusion Tools

A second consultant was recruited in early 2009 to pilot the tool and finalise it on the basis of the results of the piloting process. The three tools were initially subjected to a content analysis process. It was noted that the toolkit outlined above comprising three tools above was complex and would need to be simplified at least in the pilot process. It was therefore recommended that Tool A would be the tool that would be piloted, with modifications to make it more user-friendly and better aligned to the steps in the FTI process.

Thus the structure of the revised tool was based on the structure and content of the original Tool A. It included a total of 15 main questions. The original questions were used as well as the guidance with minor modifications. There was some reorganisation in formatting to group questions in one column on undertaking a stock-taking exercise and another to guide priorities for planning.

The proposed strategy for piloting the tool involved the following stages:

i) **Selection of the pilot countries**

It was decided that the countries that would pilot the tool should be representative of different stages of FTI participation. In particular it was important that they should include countries which were in the process of preparing a plan for FTI appraisal and endorsement and those that already had endorsed plans, but were in the process of review or revision.

A number of countries were approached to ascertain their interest and readiness to participate in the piloting process. Letters went out from the FTI and UNGEI Secretariats to more than 20 Ministries of Education and Coordinating Agencies (CA). This eventually led to three countries agreeing to participate. They were:

- Kyrgyz Republic;
- Lesotho; and
- Malawi.

Their respective FTI status is given in the table below.

Country	FTI Appraisal Endorsement	Current Education Sector Plan
Kyrgyz Republic	October 2006	Education Development Strategy (2007-2010)
Lesotho	2005	Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2005-2015
Malawi	Not yet endorsed	National Education Sector Plan (NESP) 2008-2017

As can be seen, all three countries have education sector plans in the process of implementation. At the same time all three are developing either revised plans (e.g. for the period 2009-2012 for Lesotho) or a revised version of the plan for FTI appraisal and endorsement (Malawi).

ii) **Initiation of the pilot process**

It was proposed that the pilot exercise would be introduced by the Coordinating Agency (CA) to the Local Education Group (LEG).

iii) **Establish a piloting working-group.**

Based on the introduction of the pilot exercise and the discussions, interested LEG partners would agree to work together in a working group depending on their interest, areas of engagement and capacity. The group should include representatives from key departments in the Ministry of Education, civil society organisations (CSO) and the Local Donor Group, including ideally representation from the Coordinating Agency. The CA would take the lead in organizing, planning and reporting on the exercise. The working group should also strengthen the inter-ministerial dialogue aimed at the issue of equity and inclusion and invite officials from the Ministry of Social Affairs, Family, Labour, etc. The working group would meet for the first time after the participating partners review the pilot documents. During the first meeting of the working group a work plan, deadlines and division of labour during the implementation of the exercise would be discussed.

The pilot process would be guided by the following principles:

- **Local ownership.** The tool should meet local needs and work within local processes.
- **Participation.** All relevant stakeholders should be encouraged to participate in using the tool.
- **Inclusiveness.** All should feel they have a stake in the tool, including representatives of disadvantaged populations.
- **Gender sensitivity.** All processes should be viewed through a gender lens.

iii) **The tool applied in the FTI process**

Depending on the situation in country, the tool should be used in conjunction with FTI stages 3 (Stock Taking) and 4 (Preparation, Appraisal and Endorsement) and supplement the tools that are already recommended for use in those processes.

iv) **Consultation workshop**

It was recommended that a short participatory workshop be convened to bring together all key stakeholders to orient them about the tool and the pilot process. The workshop should enable representatives of government and civil society organisations working with marginalised groups to be consulted on both data collection and identifying strategies for inclusion in the education sector of such groups.

It was also recommended that the working group identify activities to engage with stakeholders at the central and decentralized levels (e.g. government authorities, head masters, teachers, social workers, teachers unions, local interest groups, representatives from the communities, etc.). Activities could include: one-day workshops, consultations or simple questionnaires in order to collect the information necessary on the target groups and identify their specific educational needs.

After the workshop and completion of introductory activities, the working group would utilize the tools and draft a report. The working group would be responsible for the assessment of the data obtained from using the tool and present the data to the LEG together with recommended interventions to strengthen equity and inclusion.

v) **Evaluation of the tool**

The consultant provided the working group with a simple set of evaluation tools to record key information about the piloting process, stakeholders engaged and consulted throughout the process and their views on the usefulness of the tool. These tools aimed at gauging:

- **User-friendliness.** Is the tool sufficiently easy to use?

- **Relevance.** Does the tool ask the right questions?
- **Coverage.** Does the tool enable the participation of all relevant stakeholders? Who feels they can usefully use the tool? Does it cover the right issues?
- **Adequacy.** Does the tool generate the right data? Does it facilitate a useful process for stakeholder dialogue on equity and inclusion policy and strategy? Does it enable sufficient coverage of equity and inclusion issues in education sector plans?
- **Added value.** Does the tool add value to the plan preparation, review, and appraisal processes? What was done differently or better as a result of using the tool?

The consultant would analyse the data obtained and draft a concise report for each country pilot process. Countries would be asked to review the findings and to provide any additional information, as necessary.

1.4 The Pilot Process

Materials to guide the piloting process were drafted and agreed by the Working Group. These together with the tool itself were translated into Russian and Spanish for the Kyrgyz Republic and Nicaragua respectively. Letters were sent out by the Acting Head of the FTI Secretariat, Bob Prouty, and the Head of the UNGEI Secretariat, Cheryl Faye to the three pilot countries on 30 April. Three documents accompanied the letters: (1) proposed process; (2) the tool to be piloted; and (3) pilot evaluation materials.

The piloting process started up in the Kyrgyz Republic as envisaged. The take up was rapid and efficient with guidance provided by the consultant through emails as required. The commitment by UNICEF in Kyrgyz Republic was clearly a key factor as well as the readiness of the Ministry of Education to participate in the exercise. It also demonstrated the capacity to undertake a piloting exercise with minimal external support.

Delays in starting up the pilot process in Lesotho and Malawi were experienced. This resulted in a modified piloting process adapted to local processes and context. The need for changes arose from a constellation of factors which included:

- Lack of local development partner capacity to support the piloting process;
- Limited Ministry of Education and LEG capacity to take the piloting process forward;
- A crowded agenda for Ministries of Education with limited space for the piloting process to take place as envisaged.

The piloting in Lesotho was scheduled to begin in mid-July and in Malawi subsequently. In both cases the consultant traveled to the country to be available to introduce the tool and organize the piloting process on the ground. In the case of Lesotho, the pilot process was embedded in the Technical Joint Review for 2009-2010, while in Malawi, a two day workshop was convened with MoEST specifically to pilot the tool. Nicaragua dropped out of the pilot process.

The delay usefully highlighted issues of country prioritization, capacity and possibly ownership. It led to the first conclusion of the piloting process. It became very clear that the tool would not be generally usable without consultancy support despite its simplicity. This has major implications for the future uses of the tool.

2. Main Findings

2.1 Since each piloting was different in scope, process and duration,. this makes comparisons hazardous. Nevertheless, there is sufficient commonality in the results to make conclusions with

confidence. The three pilot processes are reported on separately in the report in sections 5, 6 and 7. The evaluation questionnaires were completed only in Kyrgyz Republic and Malawi. Feedback in Lesotho was given during group and plenary discussions.

2.2 The tool was generally well received in all three piloting countries by the Ministries of Education. The participation of civil society organisations was limited to the Kyrgyz Republic and Malawi, their feedback was also broadly positive. There was a sense of frustration among workshop participants in Lesotho and Malawi that the tool had not been available much earlier in the planning cycle as in both countries draft sector plans were well advanced.

2.3 The tool appears to be an important development. It provides a lens for a comprehensive assessment of the education sector in terms of the crosscutting issues of equity and inclusion. This potentially fills a major gap in education planning processes which tend to result in a fragmented approach to equity and inclusion issues. This can lead to key issues of educational disadvantage such as gender, disability or HIV being under-represented in education sector plans

2.4 **User-friendliness.** Was the tool sufficiently easy to use? A clear majority of respondents found the tool easy to use. (66% in Kyrgyz republic and 100% in Malawi). The question format appeared to be valid. There were however in all cases recommendations for revision of some of the questions. These have been used to revise the content of the tool and to modify its structure.

2.4 **Relevance.** Does the tool ask the right questions? Respondents generally found the tool to be relevant to the preparation and revision of the education sector plan. It was felt that the tool asked the right questions (84% in Kyrgyz Republic and 100% in Malawi). 100% of respondents found it relevant to the FTI.

2.5 **Coverage.** Does the tool enable the participation of all relevant stakeholders? Who feels they can usefully use the tool? Does it cover the right issues? There were lower levels of satisfaction regarding coverage of specific issues. In Kyrgyz Republic 70% of respondents felt that the tool covered the relevant issues. There was general concern in all countries that the tool did not adequately handle issues of child labour and that strengthening was required in the areas of HIV and child health and children with disabilities (particularly in Malawi). Interestingly there was little concern about the adequacy of the tool in handling gender equity issues, which may reflect a higher level of technical capacity in this area. Concerns were also raised about the helpfulness of the tool with regard to resource allocation.

2.6 **Adequacy.** Does the tool generate the right data? Does it facilitate a useful process for stakeholder dialogue on equity and inclusion policy and strategy? The answers to these questions are rather mixed. It is likely that the tool will be most useful if it is integrated into a comprehensive SRA process to generate data for decision-making. The usefulness of the tool is somewhat diminished if key data are unavailable though it can be used strategically to highlight research needs and data gaps. The piloting processes demonstrated that the tool can be used in a process to facilitate stakeholder dialogue on equity and inclusion issues though this requires careful planning, commitment to equity and inclusion and facilitator skills. The capacity to support policy dialogue between government and development partners may be one of the greatest strengths of the tool. The adequacy of the tool may also depend on the capacity of the user.

One of the most insightful comments was that the tool to be used to maximum effect required that the user be well versed in equity and inclusion analysis and interventions. With any tool, the familiarity of the user with the problems it is designed to address is likely to make a critical difference to its effectiveness. There is therefore important to consider the existing capacity of Ministries of Education to address complex equity issues and to ascertain if further training is required. There is clearly a case for considering further technical support for education planners in particular. There is a risk that a lack of capacity and interest in these policy areas among local donor partners may limit the value of the tool in policy dialogue; weak donor commitment was encountered in Malawi. There are a number of implications:

- The roll out of the tool should be accompanied by technical assistance to build technical capacity especially in planning departments of Ministries of Education to better integrate equity and inclusion issues into education sector plans;
- Not all development partners have a clear interest or local capacity in equity and inclusion issues. Agencies such as UNICEF, which have a comparative advantage in these policy areas, should be prepared to take the lead in supporting the use of the tool in new countries;

2.7 Added value. Does the tool add value to the plan preparation, review, and appraisal processes? What was done differently or better as a result of using the tool? All three pilot processes highlighted the added value of using the tool. It permits a more holistic approach to understanding and responding to issues of educational disadvantage. This was reflected in the range of issues identified some of which currently do not feature in the existing education sector plans. Whether the full potential of the tool to develop more equitable policies and strategies remains to be seen as the plans for the participating countries have yet to be finalised and endorsed. Only in the case of the Kyrgyz Republic were issues recorded that would be addressed in the revised sector plan. It would therefore be worth undertaking a rapid review of the three finalised/revised plans to see whether the issues raised in the piloting workshops have been adequately included.

2.8 Multiple uses of the tool. In the three country piloting processes, the Equity and Inclusion Tool was used to obtain a better understanding of the situation concerning equity and inclusion in the education sector. Among the benefits of using the tool that were noted by participants were :

2.8.1. Advocacy.

It was observed by participants that the tool enables the raising of the profile of issues concerning equity and inclusion in government, with civil society and with development partners. The tool enables a more holistic approach to equity and inclusion so that potentially all interest groups can participate in advocacy.

2.8.2 Stakeholder participation.

The Kyrgyz Republic piloting process demonstrates the potential for stakeholder participation in considering equity and inclusion issues in the sector planning process. The tool can be used to enhance civil society participation in the planning or review process, but this is strongly dependent on government willingness to promote such involvement in the development of sector policies and strategies. Development partner willingness to support civil society participation is another important factor.

2.8.3 Interdepartmental and cross-government collaboration.

Equity and inclusion are cross-cutting issues and require the collaboration of a range of Ministry of Education departments as well as coordination with other line ministries which are involved in social welfare, health and gender policy implementation. The tool provides a framework for interdepartmental and cross-government policy dialogue on the social dimensions of education service delivery. Interdepartmental and inter-agency dialogue was strongly marked in Lesotho, while a cross-government approach was evident in the Kyrgyz Republic and Malawi.

2.8.4 Policy dialogue.

The tool provides a framework for dialogue between the government and development partners on issues of equity and inclusion in education. This function of the tool was clearly operationalised in Lesotho and generated a lively discussion. It therefore seems likely that the tool will be useful in the FTI appraisal and endorsement process. This however needs to be

tested.

2.8.5 Situation analysis.

In all three country piloting processes, the tool provided a lens for focused attention to equity and inclusion issues which had strong implications for the education situation assessment. In all three cases, the benefits included a fresh perspective on the issues. However, in the cases of Lesotho and Malawi, the tool piloting appeared to be out of synchronicity with ongoing planning processes which could mean that the benefits of the tool piloting process are at risk of being sidelined in the rush to finalise the sector plan.

The situation analysis or (stock taking) is critical to developing an evidence-based response to issues of equity and inclusion in the sector. Such an assessment needs to be adequately researched and documented. The piloting process in any of the three countries did not lead to a SRA document of reference. This would need to happen with a more formal use of the tool.

Malawi stands out however among the pilot countries in that a substantial stock taking exercise has recently been undertaken of the education sector using FTI Education Program Development Funds (EPDF). This assessment was termed a Country Status Report (CSR) and seems to be a highly effective use of EPDF funding. The main purpose of the CSR was to enable decision-makers to orient national policy on the basis of a factual diagnosis of the overall education sector and to provide relevant analytical information for the dialogue between the Government and Development Partners. This was the second CSR for Malawi. The first one was undertaken in 2003. The 2008/09 CSR was developed between November 2007 and February 2009 by a multi-ministerial national team with the support of the World Bank and UNESCO. It is an updated and enhanced version of the first CSR. It provides key monitoring/evaluation input on the education sector overall, particularly in the framework of the implementation of the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) and the future endorsement process in the EFA FTI. Analysis in the CSR was made possible by using data and information from multiple sources, including school administrative surveys of the Ministry of Education, household surveys from National Statistics Office and the tracer survey done especially for the purpose of the CSR with the support of German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the World Bank.

A critically important question is the extent to which the CSR was able to capture the equity and inclusion issues contained in the draft tool. In any case, the CSR enabled a more informed discussion of equity and inclusion issues than would have been the case without it. Another issue is the capacity of MoEYS to translate the findings from the CSR into better policies and effective strategies to address educational disadvantage in the country.

2.8.6 Planning. In the Kyrgyz Republic concrete benefits to the planning process were reported in terms of enhanced strategies to address equity and inclusion. In Lesotho and Malawi, it was not possible to discern any concrete contributions to the planning process in the timeframe available.

3 Some lessons learned

The three pilot exercises highlighted a number of important issues to be considered when addressing educational disadvantage in the education sector plan. These include:

- The tool is useful for education planners and specialists who are concerned to address equity and inclusion issues, particularly with regard to undertaking an holistic assessment of the issues;
- Countries need to be politically committed to increasing educational equity to be able to use the tool most effectively;
- There is a need for Ministries of Education to obtain and use disaggregated data on

- education sector performance by district as well as by gender or by disadvantaged group e.g. children with special needs. National statistics alone mask patterns of inequality and are therefore inadequate for the purpose of targeted interventions for disadvantaged areas or schools;
- Countries need to invest in research to improve their understanding the causes of and trends in educational disadvantage, non-enrolment and drop out.
 - The usefulness of having a comprehensive sector situation and response analysis which is rich in data (see Malawi CSR);
 - The issue of educational development in remote mountainous areas (in all three countries). There is need to go beyond the urban and rural dichotomy and identify rural areas that are especially disadvantaged (e.g. border areas, islands, mountainous areas, conflict affected etc);
 - Educational disadvantage may be a sub-set of regional disadvantage which results from a lack of rural development and infrastructure. A multi-sectoral approach may be needed to enhance educational quality in order to improve equity in the sector.
 - The tool highlighted a number of issues that were not currently included in sector plans such as gender-based violence and teenage pregnancy.
 - The importance of orientation of key stakeholders in the sector towards greater equity and the need to train teachers on issues in both pre and in-service teacher education;
 - The importance of developing technical capacity to develop policies and strategies on equity and inclusion;
 - The complex nature of responding to educational disadvantage arising from gender, HIV, child labour and disabilities. It appears that specific and detailed reviews may be necessary to address these issues comprehensively;
 - There was recognition that existing curricula may serve to promote inequity and exclusion;
 - Donor commitment to supporting educational equity is uneven and cannot be taken for granted. Efforts are needed to garner development agency commitment to supporting efforts to address equity in education sector plans and implementation.

4. General reflections on the tool and the piloting process

4.1 For the tool to be used effectively, a great deal hinges on the technical capacity of the Ministry of Education to prepare a sector plan that it is evidence-based including a comprehensive assessment of dimensions of educational disadvantage. This approach is integral to the FTI Country Level Process as outlined in the Process Guide of December 2008 prepared by the FTI Task Team on Strengthening Country Level processes and the FTI Secretariat. Step 3 of the recommended process involves '*taking stock of the education sector*'. The key objective of this is to *consider fully the status and needs of the education sector and its context and how best to build on what is already there that will meet current and future needs*. This is very similar in concept to the situation and response analysis (SRA) approach which is used in health sector planning. It is noted that it is important to involve the participation of other arms of government responsible for youth, labour and gender as well as the participation of civil society organisations (CSOs) and other relevant stakeholders. This multi-sectoral approach is particularly important when considering the social dimensions of education sector performance.

4.2 The undertaking of a comprehensive stock taking exercise to assess sector performance including progress towards equity and inclusion needs to be planned, resourced and the results robustly documented. It appears that the stocktaking approach to education sector planning has not yet been adequately conceptualized to date in the education sector within the FTI process Guide or within education sector practice more generally. The type of SRA that is proposed by the FTI Secretariat would involve policy analysis, substantial data gathering from multiple sources on sector performance, capacity development assessment and gender analysis. Such an assessment cannot be undertaken adequately informally or without the commitment of significant resources. It requires the development of a comprehensive report that incorporates the findings of all lines of analysis and the inputs of key stakeholders. Such a report can then be discussed

within government and with civil society organisations and subsequently used as the basis for planning policy reforms and strategic interventions as well as a means of tracking sector progress. This two-stage approach to planning is currently quite hard to find documented in the education sector. Where situation assessments have taken place they tend to be piecemeal and embedded in the plan itself as justification for interventions rather than as a resource to promote critical analysis of sector performance. The lack of routine sector-wide situation and response analyses is arguably a cardinal weakness in the current state of education sector planning.

4.3 There is a need for evidence-based guidance on best practice in undertaking a situation and response analysis and opportunities for cross-country learning. The FTI process currently involves a 'light touch'. Countries are free to develop the stock taking process as they see fit, depending on the 'country-specific context'. So far, no attempt has been made to develop norms or standards of best practice in education sector SRAs or the sector plans themselves. What the FTI Process Guide suggests is a dialogue in the form of a SWOT (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis to assess whether the right choices for policies, resource allocation, prioritisation are being made. This appears to be too informal to succeed unless there has been substantial investment in a comprehensive SRA, the data from which can be used to inform such dialogue. Unless comprehensive data are available and this can take time to obtain such a SWOT exercise risks becoming anecdotal and insufficiently evidence based.

4.4 The Equity and Inclusion Tool can be seen as a response to the inadequate SRA processes informing education planning processes. The educational needs and rights of disadvantaged groups in society are not being adequately addressed in part because their situation is not well sufficiently understood and comprehensive data are lacking, including on the effectiveness of current targeted interventions to improve equity. The tool aims to support better sector analysis by *asking the right questions*. However, it seems that it cannot function adequately as a stand-alone tool in plan preparation. The Equity and Inclusion Tool needs to be incorporated into the set of tools that can be used to undertake a systematic SRA of sector performance. These include tools which are already available such as the *Guidelines for Capacity Development in the Education Sector*¹ and the *Toolkit for Mainstreaming HIV and AIDS in the Education Sector*².

5. Recommendations

5.1 The importance and potential of this new approach to educational equity and inclusion should be widely communicated in the FTI partnership;

5.2. The revised tool should be reviewed by the FTI Secretariat, UNGEI Secretariat, the UNAIDS IATT on Education and other interested stakeholders. The tool and the results of the piloting process should be presented and discussed at the next FTI partnership meeting in Rome;

5.3. There should be a process of follow up with the three pilot countries to identify next steps in adopting the tool. This could include adapting the tool to integrate it within existing planning procedures;

5.4 The revised tool should be reviewed by the FTI Secretariat, UNGEI Secretariat, the UNAIDS IATT on Education and other interested stakeholders. The tool and the results of the piloting process should be presented and discussed at the next FTI partnership meeting in Rome;

5.5 The revised tool should be introduced to a range of new countries within the framework of the FTI. It would be most useful if the tool could be included at an early stage in processes to

¹ EFA FTI. 2008. Funded by GTZ.

² UNAIDS IATT on Education. 2008.

undertake a stock-taking analysis and b) preparation of the plan itself. Selection of the countries should rely on demand from the Ministry of Education and the tool should be recommended, but not mandatory for sector plan development;

5.6 The EPDF should be considered as a means of providing financial support for countries to use the tool in plan preparation, review and revision processes;

5.7 There remains a need to assess the usefulness of the tool in supporting the appraisal and endorsement process from an equity and inclusion perspective;

5.8 The roll out of the tool should be accompanied by technical assistance to build technical capacity especially in planning departments of Ministries of Education to better integrate equity and inclusion issues into education sector planning processes;

5.9 Consideration should be given to providing technical support to Ministries of Education wishing to adapt the tool to meet the requirements of their planning and review processes.

5.10 There will be value in taking a regional approach to enable cross-country sharing and learning in addressing equity and inclusion in general and applying the tool in particular;

5.11 Not all development partners have a clear interest or local capacity in equity and inclusion issues. Agencies such as UNICEF, which have a comparative advantage in these policy areas, should be prepared to take the lead in developing the use of the tool in new countries;

5.10 The FTI Secretariat should consider developing a web page on education equity and inclusion issues and feature the tool.

5. Kyrgyz Republic

1. Background

The Ministry of Education, Science and Youth Policy (MoESYP) of the Kyrgyz Republic has developed its education strategy for the period 2006-2010 as an integral part of the Country Development Strategy (2006-2010). This was appraised and endorsed by the FTI in 2006.

The FTI appraisal and endorsement report contains no systematic approach to assessing equity and inclusion. In fact, there is no mention of education disadvantage arising from poverty, gender or disability. However, a number of important related issues are noted. These include:

- Child health and the rising number of children living with HIV;
- More attention to be paid to the outcomes of the Rural Education Programme;
- ECD only benefits affluent children;
- Interventions should be concentrated on selected regions in the country where school attendance and achievement are the worst;
- Gender disaggregated data collection and analysis by MoESYP has only just begun

2. The Piloting Process

The duration of the piloting process in the Kyrgyz Republic was almost two months and comprised 5 stages. It was by far the most structured approach among the three participating countries. The five stages enabled a more inclusive and comprehensive piloting process. They were as follows:

2.1. Preparation (1-15 May 2009). A multi-stakeholder seminar was organized on the objectives, structure and content of the tool and how it could be piloted in the Kyrgyz context. Participants included representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES); Kyrgyz Education Academy, universities, the Asian Development bank, UNICEF, Save the Children and local NGOs. However not all stakeholders were able to participate. The Ministries of Labour and Social protection for example were not represented.

Representatives of organization working in the fields of girls' education, children with disabilities, working children, ethnic minorities, street children, orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC), urban slums, remote rural communities and teaching practitioners. Women were strongly represented at the seminar (25 out of 31 participants).

The seminar provided the occasion for the setting up of the Local Education Group (LEG). This was clearly a significant outcome of the process. It is interesting to conjecture whether the setting up of a task-based LEG is likely to be more dynamic and committed than one that has been bureaucratically established to meet donor requirements.

Two objectives were locally set for the piloting process, indicating strong ownership. The first objective was to support the use of the tool in shaping policy and strategy within the education sector plan. The second was to evaluate the usefulness of the tool and improve it on the basis of feedback from users. The piloting process would be guided by a number of principles including inclusion and involvement of all relevant stakeholders, a strong focus on gender issues.

2.2. Using the tool (20-May- 3 June 2009). The first meeting of the LEG focused on how they would use the tool and formulated a strategy accordingly. Weekly working meetings were held. A multi-disciplinary dialogue was maintained on equity and inclusion. Information from stakeholders working with vulnerable groups of children was collected, analysed and discussed.

2.3. Data collection and analysis (3-10 June 2009). Data were analysed. The structure and content of the tool were assessed in the process.

2.4. Revision of the tool (10-17 June). A revised version based on local piloting experience was produced.

2.5. Piloting Report prepared and presented (17-24 June).

3. Main findings of the piloting process

The main conclusion reported by the LEG was that piloting the Equity and Inclusion tool was a *relevant and timely task*. The tool highlights disadvantaged children and their right to quality education and was found to be particularly useful for assessing the situation of disadvantaged children in the country. It raised the profile of the issues involved, facilitated cooperation between different agencies in the education sector as well across sectors. Participants felt that the tool would help in shaping policy, strategy and planning in addressing issues of equity and inclusion.

While almost all respondents who completed the pilot evaluation instruments agreed on the relevance of the tool for plan preparation and adds value to the process, detailed feedback indicated that the structure and content of the tool needed to be adapted and adjusted. Such adaptation would be necessary to customize it to the Kyrgyz context. This was a specific recommendation.

Levels of user satisfaction with the tool were generally positive. The questionnaire revealed the following results (N=30):

- 66% considered the tool easy to use;
- 96% considered the tool relevant to plan preparation; 83% thought it added value and 100% found it relevant for the FTI;
- 70% agreed that the tool covered the relevant issues; 84% that it asked the right questions and 100% that it identifies issues that require further research;
- 92% agreed that the tool provides sufficient guidance on monitoring and evaluation;
- 94% (of which 36% strongly) agreed that the tool helps in identifying strategies to enhance equity and inclusion and 100% that it improves the evaluation and endorsement process.

There were high levels of satisfaction reported on the tools adequacy in specific issue areas:

- Gender (92%);
- Disability (100%);
- HIV and child health (84%);
- Civil society participation (100%)

The main areas of contention identified in the questionnaire responses were:

- Ease of use (34% found it difficult to use);
- Coverage of relevant issues (29% reported that it did not cover all the relevant issues);
- Helpfulness in resource allocation (34% did not find it helpful);

- Child labour (41% did not consider it handles issues adequately).

It was felt that some issues in the tool are too broad and it is hard to give clear answers to the questions relating to them. Participants felt that there is need for some open-ended questions to replace closed questions.

It was mentioned that not all agencies in the education sector are competent to answer all of the questions.

3.1 Situation Analysis

Specific comments were made on the questions provided in the toolkit for undertaking a situation assessment on the status of equity and inclusion.

It was felt that the situation assessment process can draw the attention of government agencies and the general public to the problems of equity and inclusion.

The main suggestions for revision are recorded below:

- There is a need to separate out issues relating to inequities in primary enrolment and completion;
- The concept of 'champions' for equity and inclusion needs to be reconsidered/replaced;
- Disadvantaged settings need to be considered as well as the disadvantaged child;
- Equality of opportunity for men as an issue was raised;
- With regard to how the curriculum supports inclusion and equity, it is necessary to start with assessing if they are included at all, and whether they are included in educational standards;
- The issue of how children who do not go to school are monitored.

3.2 Planning process and prioritisation

There were relatively few **comments provided on the planning column** of the tool. The following suggestions were made for revision of the tool:

- Include what strategies need to be considered at family, community and national level to promote equity and inclusion in education.
- What interventions are required with regard to educational standards?
- The issue of education of remote mountainous areas.

The application of the tool resulted in a number of recommendations being made for strengthening equity and inclusion in the education sector plan. These are listed below:

- Include the principles of equity and inclusion in the unified state educational standard curricula for mainstream schools;
- Revise the pre- and in-service service training programmes of teachers, school administrators and education managers to include issues of equity and inclusion;
- Establish capacity at the Kyrgyz Academy of Education for developing training and methodological guidebooks on inclusion and equity;

- Establish psychological, medical and educational units at rayon level (city) to identify vulnerable groups of children and coordinate interventions;
- Appoint a psychologist in each mainstream school;
- Undertake public advocacy on equity and inclusion issues;
- Create conditions in schools to facilitate the inclusion of children with special needs e.g. ramps, recreation rooms, special education needs equipment;
- Develop various alternative approaches to educating different groups of vulnerable children;
- Provide recommendations to the National Statistical Committee to include data about children from vulnerable groups in mainstream schools in statistical reports.

6. Lesotho

1. Background

The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2005-2015 was endorsed by the local education group in 2005. First among the plan sector objectives is improving access, efficiency and equity of education and training at all levels.

The ESSP is 177 pages long and is organized in terms of the various sub-components of the education sector such as integrated early childhood care and development (IECCD), basic education, secondary education, technical and vocational training (TVET) and higher education. The plan therefore presents something of a fragmented approach to education sector strengthening.

The plan contains sections on crosscutting issues and activities as well as institutional capacity considerations towards the end of the document. It lacks a comprehensive situation assessment of the sector which identifies the key overarching policies, basic trends, effective interventions and challenges to progress. Instead, situation analyses are included under each sub-section. There is no systematic assessment of educational disadvantage by geographical zone, district or by demographic group which would inform strategic choices to improve educational equity and inclusion. All statistical data presented represent national statistics. There are no disaggregated data presented apart from by gender.

Issues of equity and inclusion occur throughout the plan in the various sections. For example in the section on IECCD, mention is made of poverty, special needs and disadvantaged areas, but no relevant data are provided. In the section on basic education, prominence is given to monitoring gender disparities and addressing HIV. The most comprehensive assessment of the factors that create educational disadvantage is to be found in the section on secondary education where the costs of education, family commitments and income and weather in mountainous areas are mentioned as resulting in non-enrolment or drop out. The section on cross cutting issues includes sub-sections on Special Education, Gender in Education and HIV in the education sector. No data are presented on children with special educational needs, gender issues or children infected with or affected by HIV. MoET's objective for special education is to advocate inclusion of children with special educational needs/disabilities in to the regular school system at all levels, while recognising the ongoing need for specialised schools for learners with 'extreme needs'.

The original FTI Endorsement report did not address issues of equity and inclusion. A major focus was the cost structure and the financing of the plan. In evaluating the quality of the plan concerns were raised about how MoET would tackle HIV, the lack of data on orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and children with special needs and the use of data from the Education Geographic Information system.

An EFA FTI Catalytic Fund Project was prepared in partnership with Irish Aid in July to support the MoET to achieve primary school completion targets through improvements in school infrastructure, improved distribution of qualified teachers, interventions to enhance the quality of teaching and improved access to early childhood education. This will include a targeted intervention, a '*difficult school allowance package*³ to support designated difficult schools which are most difficult to access. These are mostly small schools in mountainous areas typically lacking any qualified teachers.

³ A difficult school is defined as schools whose location and physical conditions render them unattractive to fully qualified teachers to take up jobs in them.

A medium term education sector plan has been drafted by MoET for 2009/10-2012/3 and was submitted to the LEG for endorsement during the tool pilot process. The piloting therefore was undertaken too late to have any significant bearing on this process.

2. The piloting process

The piloting of the equity and inclusion tool with the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) in Lesotho took place within the framework of the Joint Technical Review (JTR) for 2009-2010. A 2-day meeting was held for this purpose in Maseru on 14-15 July 2009. It was agreed that the first day would include assessments of education sector performance and the setting of priorities for the mid-term education sector plan. The afternoon of the second day would provide the opportunity to introduce the tool to MoET and to use it to reflect on sector performance as well as to support the development of the mid-term sector plan.

The time allocation for piloting the tool was therefore very short. Participation was limited to MoET staff who had been selected for the Joint Technical Review. This meant that many of the participants had responsibilities for sub-sectors of education beyond primary education including technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education. The time was divided into two sessions. A short introduction to the tool concerning its purpose, structure and contents was given by the consultant. This was followed up by small group work applying the tool to their particular areas of the sector.

Participants included representatives from the various departments of the MoET and development partners (World Food Programme, Irish Aid, the World Bank, UNICEF and JICA).

2.1 Main findings of the piloting process

The findings are based on plenary discussion of the tool and what the implications were for the education sector plan. There was broad consensus that the tool was relevant to the needs of the MoET and in particular obtaining a better understanding of the factors which are responsible for educational disadvantage in the country. It was acknowledged that there was a lack of a mechanism for undertaking such crosscutting analysis.

There was broad agreement that the tool was easy to use, with some dissent. It was generally felt that there was a need to rationalise and simplify the tool wherever possible.

One of the most telling comments was 'Why did we haven't have this earlier'? There had been a lengthy process of plan preparation for 2009-2012 and the tool could have been used at an earlier stage to influence the content and direction of the plan. There was little time at this stage to bring about major changes in education sector plan strategy.

The tool highlighted the need for better data, including disaggregated data on poverty and remoteness concerning educational disadvantage. There was a need to separate out the factors which result in non-enrolment from those which cause drop out. In particular there was a need to better understand the factors that contributed to children dropping out from primary school.

Lesotho has many policies on education. These need to be better communicated and disseminated. It is difficult at present to understand which policies are in place from the ESSP. Policy dissemination is another critical issue which does not appear to have been adequately addressed in the plan.

The tool facilitated what might be described as policy dialogue between the MoET and the development partners. It was suggested that this might constitute one of its most useful applications. The dialogue brought in to the open issues that do not feature in the ESSP such as gender-based violence and sexual abuse at school and the adequacy of the HIV prevention education curriculum, but are clearly important to education sector development in Lesotho.

The following points were made about the tool with regard to its revision:

- The section on policies (C) needs to include legislation concerning education;
- There is duplication in the section on strategies (D);
- The section on institutional arrangements (E) needs to include mention of institutional capacity. The question about 'champions for equity and inclusion' caused difficulty and it was recommended that this be reworded.
- With regard to schools (F), capacity to address equity and inclusion was mentioned as was the importance of infrastructure development in ensuring that schools are welcoming and safe for disadvantaged children;
- The question on parental and community participation (9) was considered to be too complex and recommended for rewording. It was suggested that the term *marginalized* be replaced by *disadvantaged*;
- The section on teachers (H) needs to include issues of teacher capacity and deployment. There needs to be mention of teachers' unions;
- The section on the curriculum (I) needs to include consideration of curriculum reform/development processes and co-curricular activities;
- There needs to be a section for summarising critical issues which have been identified through applying the tool.

7. Malawi

1. Background

Malawi has developed a National Education Sector Plan (NESP) for the period 2008-2017. As in the case of the Lesotho ESSP it presents priorities by sub-sector e.g. early childhood development, non-formal education, primary education, secondary education, TVET and higher education. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) is currently developing a sector plan based on the NESP for FTI endorsement. A recent draft of this plan had been shared with the donors in the LEG but it was not used in the piloting process or shared with the consultant.

There is no overall situation analysis for the sector within the NESP. The more comprehensive situation analysis contained in the CSR was finalised subsequently in 2009. Within each sub-sector section there is an analysis of the particular challenges to be faced though these are not generally backed by statistical data. There is no section on cross-cutting issues such as gender, HIV or special needs education. The NESP does however identify a number of challenges relating to equity and inclusion:

- Lack of integration of special needs in early childhood development (ECD) provision;
- Limited integration of special needs in adult literacy and continuing education;
- Poor male participation in adult literacy and continuing education;
- Poor access for children with special needs in primary education;
- Poor retention of girls mainly from standards five to eight;
- Negative impact of HIV on primary education;
- Inadequate access to secondary education of children with special needs and orphans;
- Poor retention of girls due to long distances to school and unfavourable gender environments;
- Negative impact of HIV on teachers and students.

The CSR (2009) contains a wealth of data on the education sector. Among the equity related issues that it covers, the following are particularly noteworthy:

i) The Malawian education system has to develop within a heavier demographic context than that of its neighboring countries. If universal primary education is reached before 2018, primary school places for 4.8 million children will be needed in 2018. This represents 45% more primary school places compared to those available in 2008.

ii) The large majority of the population (82%) still lives in rural areas where school supply and demand are weaker. 63% of Malawians live on less than US\$2 a day. Considerable disparities in access exist and they increase along with the level of education. A family's standard of living is the greatest factor in educational discrimination. Access to each level of education suffers as result from gender but even more from location and income disparities. The difference in the primary completion rate is 14% between boys and girls, but 34% between urban and rural students. The disparity is still greater (44%) between the richest 20% of the population and the poorest 20%. University students from the poorest quintile make up only 0.7% of students, while the richest quintile accounts for 91%. In Malawi, the 10% most educated (those who study longest) benefit from 73% of the public resources allocated to the education sector. The conclusion drawn *is that the Malawian education system the most elitist system in Africa.*

iii) Schooling inequalities are also geographical. The Northern region has better educational coverage than the two others. The primary completion rate is more than 50% in a few districts (Mzimba, Nkhatabay and Rumphu), while it is below 30% in six others (Dedza, Mangochi, Ntcheu, Machinga, Phalombe, and Thyolo).

iv) The HIV epidemic dramatically affects the development of the education sector because of the deaths of both teachers and parents.

v) Access to Standard 1 in primary education is almost universal (4% of children never attend primary school), but the dropout rate is still very high, leading to only a 35% primary completion rate (PCR). The poor retention rate in primary education comes from a lack of demand, in particular among the poorest. Economic difficulties and behaviour such as early marriage, pregnancy, and family responsibilities are cited to explain the fragility of school demand. The lack of supply as evidenced in crowded classrooms, open-air or temporary classrooms, and incomplete schools also has a negative effect on retention.

vii) The internal efficiency coefficient (IEC) at the primary level is particularly low (35%), which implies that 65% of public resources are wasted in paying for repeated grades or schooling for students who dropout before cycle completion. Repetition rates have increased over the 1999–2006 period to reach 20% in primary education, a level that is the highest in the region.

To address these challenges, the CSR makes the following policy recommendations.

- Enhance knowledge sharing about the education system's strengths and weaknesses;
- Strengthen capacity to ensure better data production for planning policies, monitoring, and performance;
- Increase the budget priority for primary education;
- Enroll the last unreached children who never went to school;
- Reduce dropouts within the cycle;
- Reduce repetition rate;
- Improve quality; and
- Better manage the allocation of teaching staff and other resources in schools.

Shortcomings in data are acknowledged. Improvements are required in birth registration and in the way the Education Management Information System (EMIS) monitors school drop out and reintegration. Children who are unreached by the education system need to be identified and their special needs assessed and met to ensure that they go to school. Demand for schooling among the poorest will be stimulated by cash transfers, school meals and advocacy programmes. Advocacy against early marriage and in favour of postponing pregnancy is also recommended. School effectiveness would be enhanced by increasing the responsibility of the community in school management. Equal learning conditions for all children would be supported through ensuring that the allocation of teaching staff is well balanced throughout the country and matches the needs of the students. A stable incentive-based system is needed for rural and remote areas. More female teachers should be recruited (currently 26% of all primary teachers) through affirmative action.

It can be readily concluded that issues of equity and inclusion are of fundamental importance to education sector development in Malawi. Moreover, investments aimed at improving the quality of education cannot be decoupled from issues of equity. It should be noted that the CSR is not fully comprehensive in its assessment of equity and inclusion issues. There is for example no analysis of special needs education. There are no statistical data on the causes of school drop-out by region or of the impact of HIV on educational supply and demand. The partial handling of equity issues has implications for the future use of the equity and inclusion tool.

The MoEST has prepared a draft National Education Sector Policy Statement (2009) which consolidates all existing education sector policies in one document for ease of reference. This is a

very useful development in that it will facilitate both policy analysis and implementation within the NESP. The current draft of the NESP lacks a section outlining MoEST policies for the sector. The draft document includes national policy on cross-cutting policies covering gender mainstreaming, special needs education, school health, nutrition and HIV and guidance and counseling.

GTZ had funded a consultancy in 2008 to use the *FTI Guidelines for Capacity Development in the Education Sector* toolkit. A report had been submitted to MoEST highlighting the key findings from the use of the tool. It is to be noted that the GTZ-developed tool was supported by a consultancy in order to be operationalised.

2. The Piloting Process

The piloting process was organized by the LEG lead agency, UNICEF, in partnership with the MoEST. A two-day workshop was held on 21-22 July in Lilongwe to introduce the tool and to enable it to be piloted by key stakeholders.

Participants were drawn mainly from MoEST. The development partners were represented by UNICEF only. One representative from civil society was present. The session was convened by the Director of Planning, MoEST, Dr Augustine Kamlongera.

The first day involved a presentation of the tool followed by discussion. This was followed by group work using the situation analysis column of the tool (A). The second day focused the planning column of the tool (C) and again utilised group work followed by plenary presentations.

3. Findings

The first group work session featured an attempt to develop a situation analysis of the education sector from an equity and inclusion perspective. An immediate issue was access to data. As has been observed above the CSR while yielding many important insights into the status of the education sector in Malawi still contains significant data gaps. It was suggested that the University of Malawi Centre for Education and Training should be involved in data gathering and analysis.

Another early issue was that of ownership of the tool. Where should the tool reside: in government, in civil society or with the development partners? It seemed from discussion that the logical home for the tool would be within the Planning Department of MoEST. To locate it there would however require that the tool be appropriately tailored to the Malawi context.

The group work applied the tool to identify several groups of children who would be vulnerable to non-enrolment and drop out. These were:

- Poor children especially those living in severe poverty (boys and girls);
- Children with special educational needs (especially among the poor). Children with severe disabilities (deaf, blind or with cerebral palsy) were unlikely to be enrolled;
- Children living in remote rural areas (boys and girls). Physical barriers such as rivers and mountains had an impact on school participation. Also the weather is a factor since during the rainy season access to school may be curtailed by floods or lack of weatherproof clothing;
- Orphans (especially those living in remote areas) and children from broken families. The lack of role models was cited as an important factor in school drop out in such families;
- Sexually abused children (largely due to domestic abuse) and sexual harassment and violence in the school;

- Children living in areas where there are plantations (tea and tobacco) and vulnerable to involvement in child labour;
- Street children;
- Girls (especially if poor) arising from cultural practices supporting boy preference. Early marriage and teenage pregnancy were also reasons for drop out of girls;
- Children living with or affected by HIV;
- Children from families in which parents migrate for employment opportunity elsewhere.

It was noted that targeted strategies were required to address school drop out. This included strategies for gender, HIV education, health and nutrition and disability. The Child Friendly Schools (CFS) guidelines were viewed as important at the school level with regard to improving retention rates. Geographical remoteness was considered to be a significant dimension of educational disadvantage.

In developing planning responses to the problems identified in the situation analysis, one group organized its interventions in terms of strategies to address barriers to educational participation arising out of geographical remoteness. These included the following suggestions:

- Provision of grants to communities to enable them to erect standard classrooms in difficult areas;
- Support for girls in standards 5-8 including monetary incentives for school attendance;
- School feeding;
- Construction of teachers' houses;
- Strengthening community participation in school management.

Other groups identified a range of priorities which included:

- Review all relevant existing policies and strategies. Disseminate policies to all levels of the education system;
- Scaling up school health and nutrition interventions. These would include the school health and feeding programme, HIV education, take home nutrition packages; and improved provision of school water and sanitation. The issue of whether the MoEST HIV Unit was adequate to meet the challenges was raised by participants;
- Enhancement of teacher training for equity and inclusion. This would include the deployment of special education needs (SEN) personnel; in-service training (INSET) for SEN teachers; strengthening HIV education training; incentive packages for teachers deployed to rural areas; strengthening guidance and counseling services and enhancing open and distance learning;
- Strengthening the EMIS. This would include collection of data and a special focus on equity and inclusion issues; data collection and merging across ministries; improving dissemination of EMIS data to all stakeholders; strengthening monitoring and evaluation in the planning directorate; developing a comprehensive list of indicators and producing timely reports;
- Improving physical infrastructure. This would involve enhancing the role of government and communities to make schools safe and welcoming;

- Improve the curriculum to make it address equity and inclusion issues. This would include reviewing and revising textbooks, instructional materials and ensuring an adequate supply at school level;
- Strengthen child participation at school using existing structures such as students' clubs, CFS clubs, Edzi Toto clubs and HIV clubs;
- Enhance school capacity including strengthening the implementation of CFS;
- Target the most educationally disadvantaged districts;
- Increase community participation in decision making in school management utilising existing community structures such as the Village Development Committee, the parent-teacher association (PTA) PTA and school management committee (SMC).
- Increase the allocation of resources, both financial and human to address equity and inclusion issues;

The pilot evaluation forms were distributed to participants at the end of the workshop. 9 were completed and returned. The questions in the section (A) on the situation analysis were felt to be particularly useful. The section on plan preparation was considered very important as it provides a road map for the types of interventions that would address the issues identified in the situation assessment. The following results were obtained from the questionnaires:

- The questionnaire is easy to use and adds value to plan preparation/revision: (100%);
- The questions are relevant (100%);
- The questionnaire asks the right questions (100%);

Areas where the responses were slightly less positive concerned specific aspects of the tool:

- Prioritisation of interventions (1 dissenter out of 9);
- Identifying priority groups (1 dissenter);
- Helps identify strategies (1 dissenter)
- Helps resource allocation (1 dissenter)
- Sufficient guidance (2 dissenters);
- Guidance on indicators and monitoring (3 dissenters);
- Adequacy in handling issues relating to child labour/work (3 dissenters), HIV and child health (2 dissenters) and children with disabilities (2 dissenters);

Specific comments on the tool contents included:

- Separate out primary enrolment from school completion;
- Suggested rewording of the question on '*champion of equity*';
- 'What strategies are in place to address equity and inclusion?' A more holistic approach is needed than is present in the tool at present;
- There is a need to review existing policies;

- Highlight the issue of policy dissemination;
- Separate out training for different categories of staff e.g. school administrators, teachers etc;
- There is a need for more guidance including on specific interventions for special needs education and children most at risk of dropping out from school;
- There is a need for more guidance on costings;
- How are equity and inclusion to be monitored?
- Additional questions are required for planners on child labour issues; HIV and children and issues that require further research;
- Some issues are handled by other ministries;
- Include infrastructure development in remote areas; school construction; feeder road maintenance; rural electrification;
- Include greater mention of street children;
- Customise the tool for Malawi;
- The tool can only bring out equity and inclusion issues if the people themselves are conversant with the issues. Otherwise there is a risk of a superficial response;
- The tool is a bit bulky and long.
- The tool should be forwarded to the Centre for Education Research and Training for research on equity and inclusion issues;
- The workshop needs to include representation from all different stakeholders;
- Need to learn from other African countries in this area;

Following the workshop, a short presentation was given to local donor representatives including DFID, GTZ and USAID at the UNICEF office within the regular LEG meeting. With the exception of UNICEF, none had participated directly in the Equity and Inclusion tool piloting process. There was interest from some of the donors, however one representative of an organization that has been a key supporter of the FTI expressed his opinion that the piloting process was not a priority 'for us.' It was unclear as to who this included, his organization or the donor group in general. Reacting to probing about this position, he said that the benefits to be obtained through participation in the FTI process were outweighed by the effort required. Moreover, the FTI was in the process of being evaluated and might not be around for much longer. There was no dissent from the larger group. This was a revealing position to take. The issue could not credibly have been one of time. The demands of the piloting process had been reduced to the minimum and had involved little more than two days participation of those concerned.

A key issue seems to be one of commitment to the additional workload that participation in the FTI involves among some members of the local donor group. This may which be quite contrary to the positive headquarters position of the organisations involved. Such lack of commitment if consistently applied is probably quite capable of compromising the effectiveness of local FTI processes and undermining the FTI partnership at the front line of activity.