

Meeting between Education Fast Track Initiative Partners with Civil Society *October 12, 2006, Brussels*



The purpose of this meeting organized by the World Bank, with the collaboration of the Fast Track Initiative and the Global Campaign for Education (FTI), was to provide an opportunity for an exchange between key civil society actors working on education and the leadership of the Education Fast Track Initiative on advancing efforts to provide access to basic education in the coming months. The session was chaired by HE Patrick Gomes, Ambassador of Guyana to the EU and Chair of the Africa Caribbean and Pacific Group (ACP) Ambassadors Committee on Sustainable Development. The panellists were Ms. Marja Karjalainen, Unit for Human Development, Social Cohesion and Employment, DG Development, the European Commission, Mr. Desmond Bermingham – Head of the FTI Secretariat, Ms. Ruth Kagia, Sector Director for Education, World Bank, and Lucia Fry – Global Campaign for Education (GCE). Participants included representatives of the Global Campaign for Education, the European Commission, the World Bank EU Liaison Office, and the ACP Secretariat.

Welcome and Introductions

HE Patrick Gomes welcomed the participants and stressed on the importance of the meeting in the broader efforts to achieve sustainable development. For the ACP Group of countries the meeting was particularly timely coming soon after the first meeting of ACP Ministers on Education in May 2006 in Brussels. The Ministers meeting had resulted in the adoption of an ACP Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development in ACP States, which emphasizes the need to intensify efforts to provide universal basic education.



Marja Karjalainen, European Commission

Speaking on behalf of the European Commission, the current co-chair of the FTI Partnership, Ms. Karjalainen informed the meeting of efforts made by the European Commission on education programs and progress made by the FTI.

The European Commission's direct support to education under the 9th European Development Fund (EDF) totals 484 million Euros in 21 ACP countries. In addition the Commission supported the FTI Catalytic Fund with 63 million Euros. Furthermore, some 2.5 billion Euros were channelled through general budget support in 28 ACP countries, part of which benefits education. As regards the 10th EDF, programming is under way and details are not available on allocations.

Thus far, 23 countries have been endorsed for the FTI, and there will be 34 by early 2007. Growth in enrolment has been impressive, particularly in some of the heretofore worst performing countries. FTI is extending its Catalytic Fund to provide longer-term funding. This will mean more predictability of funding

The FTI has in effect become a tool for harmonising donors at national level through government's education plans based on FTI benchmarks. With regard to its governance, FTI

members are looking to keep the process light and transparent and improve communication on its work and the dialogue with civil society. To this end the FTI Partnership would particularly welcome further civil society advocacy at national level.

The next FTI partnership meeting will be held on November 13-14 in Cairo immediately preceding the UNESCO High Level Group on EFA on November 15-16.

Desmond Bermingham, FTI Secretariat

Desmond Bermingham in his intervention welcomed the contributions civil society actors had made to advocacy on the FTI. He stated that while aid for basic education has increased significantly since the establishment of the FTI, analyses shows that higher increases are needed if the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) are to be achieved. Beyond financing, there is a need to build local capacity in recipient countries on education.

Ruth Kagia, World Bank

Ms Kagia also commended the work advocacy of the civil society actors within the GCE.

She stated that advocacy on issues such as user fees has helped Bank staff working on education with their own internal lobbying. Thanks to the GCE work World Bank has moved to address apparent inherent contradictions in some of its policies impacting on education.

The Bank would like the GCE to help in communication on the entire FTI package – Not just on resource mobilization but also on capacity building and monitoring at country level. Perhaps the next GCE reports could examine this issue. Illustrations from CSOs on what donors are getting for their money through investing in FTI would be helpful. In addition ideas from CSOs on how to expand the FTI to fragile states would also be very useful.

Lucia Fry – Global Campaign for Education

Ms Fry in her presentation informed the participants of GCE plans on further advocacy and responded to some of the suggestions made to civil society advocates on education.

The GCE will be working on ensuring that promises made by rich countries in increasing aid are delivered. A large proportion of this increased aid is expected from EU Member States. The FTI could help drive this process.

The GCE through its members in developing countries could play a role in helping in country monitoring of FTI implementation. GCE will be producing a Global School Report in 2007 as well as an Asia Report Card.

Discussion

Key points put forward during the discussion included the need for predictable long term funding for education, and the need for monitoring for developing country performance on funding education.

With regard to long-term funding, the EC informed the meeting that it intends to put in place a new instrument – MDG contract - that will ensure more predictable long term funding (up to six years) linked to MDG progress.

While there is general appreciation of the School Reports produced by GCE that monitor donor performance on aid to education it was recognised that Reports on the performance of developing countries on education also need to be produced.

A number of participants cautioned FTI partners to ensure that FTI funds are additional and not simply substitute to development country funding on education.

In response to a query from the ACP on the EC's governance program, participants were informed that the next country programs for ACP countries will include a governance tranche, whereby countries demonstrating good governance would be rewarded with additional funds.

In closing remarks the FTI representative stated that there is now a belief that the education MDG can be realised. 2007 will be an important year in the realization of this goal, with the promises of increased aid and the German Presidency of the G8. A key challenge will be in holding donors to account. To this end he called on civil society actors to be more challenging in their advocacy towards donors.