

July 2009 action:

## A New Global Compact on Education for All: open letter to the G8

**RESULTS**  
the power to end hunger and poverty

### TAKE ACTION:

**URGENT: the G8 summit in L'Aquila begins tomorrow, July 8<sup>th</sup>** - Write a letter **TODAY** to local and/or national newspapers supporting the open letter calling on the G8 to establish a fully-funded Global Fund for Education. If your letter is published please forward a copy to the RESULTS office and to the Prime Minister either by post at 10 Downing Street or by going to the Number 10 website: <https://email.number10.gov.uk/>. You could also send a copy to your MP and ask him or her to write to the Prime Minister to urge his support.

### Introduction

Since 2000 over 40 million more children have entered the school system. Many countries, like Kenya, have abolished school fees, allowing poor children into a system that previously excluded them. There have been some real advances that the global community should be proud of.

However, there are still 75 million children out of school. Over 50% of these are girls, they live predominantly in rural areas and conflict-affected fragile states, and over one third are disabled. Huge barriers remain to getting these children into school – and many countries still charge user fees.

The economic crisis and rising food prices have already pushed 100 million people back into poverty, and there is a real fear that the advances we have achieved could be lost.

### Education for All and a 'Global Fund for Education'

As a global community we therefore need to take the initiative and reinvigorate the promise of education for all. Despite large pledges from several donor governments, including the UK and the Netherlands, aid to basic education has stagnated since 2004.

Against this backdrop, the election of President Obama offers an opportunity we should not pass by. During his election campaign, Obama promised to establish a 'Global Fund for Education' and endow it with \$2 billion – a huge step for the American government who have previously neglected aid to basic education.

### The G8 and a Global Fund for Education

Over the next couple of days, leaders of the G8 group of richest nations will be meeting in L'Aquila, Italy, to discuss responses to the economic crisis. It is vital that we emphasise to them the importance of education as a sustainable investment and a vital part of the plan to tackle the crisis and re-establish growth.

Moral leaders around the world, including Desmond Tutu, have signed an open letter to the G8 leaders, urging them to establish a truly global and fully-funded 'Global Fund for Education', with initial meetings to launch the initiative held by the end of the year.

### What should the Global Fund look like?

As well as attracting more money, it is essential that a Global Fund for Education ensures that money is spent in the most effective way possible. The fund should build on the experiences and mechanisms of the past.

It should be transparent and open to scrutiny by civil society in donor and recipient countries, following the model of the successful Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. RESULTS has championed the current Global Fund over the past few years for these very reasons – transparency has enabled the Global Fund to identify areas in which it is not performing satisfactorily and work to fix them, making it a much more effective and flexible financing mechanism than most multilateral initiatives, for example the World Bank.

Crucially, it should build on the achievements of the Education for All: Fast Track Initiative ('the FTI'), rather than being set up as a separate, parallel fund. The FTI was established in 2002 to coordinate donor activities toward education for all and ensure that they supported comprehensive country plans established by the recipient government. The FTI has had significant successes – making donor aid more coordinated and better aligned with country priorities. This has been associated with higher rates of enrolment and completion of primary education. A Global Fund should grow out of the FTI, retaining these successes and building on the areas in which it has not been so successful. Over the past few years RESULTS has called on donors to fully fund the FTI, recognising that it is currently the best mechanism that we have for delivering multilateral aid to basic education.

## Problems in the FTI

As well as successes the FTI does have major problems. It is chronically underfunded, which means it is not achieving its aim of ensuring that 'no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources'. There is therefore an urgent need to mobilise more donors, like the Obama government, to give to basic education through a coordinated multilateral mechanism.

The FTI also struggles to work effectively in conflict-affected fragile states because it is not flexible enough to respond to rapidly changing situations or work with partners other than national governments. The FTI has in the past ignored the issue of disability. Although this is changing gradually, progress is not fast enough for the millions of excluded disabled children.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the FTI has huge problems with disbursement, which is the speed at which it actually releases money to recipients. For example, between May 2007 and September 2008, the Catalytic Fund (one of the two major streams of funding managed by the FTI) released only \$3.2 million of the \$627 million that had been earmarked for recipient countries. The delay in disbursement has been blamed on the strict requirements imposed by the World Bank, which currently houses the FTI. These requirements are not well understood by recipient governments and were never intended to apply to the FTI in the original plan for the initiative.

Developing the FTI into a fully funded Global Fund for Education could solve this problem – the Global Fund would be its own body, outside the World Bank and with only one clear set of conditions attached to its funds.

## Why we need a Global Fund for Education

The successes of the FTI should be celebrated. A recent report from the FTI introduced the stories of Bako and Bernard Rabemanantso from Madagascar who are proud of their nine-year old daughter, a talented mathematician and the first of their eight children going beyond lower primary school; Najiba in Yemen, who still knows a lot of girls in her small village who do not go to school and who dreams about becoming a teacher; and Dorj, a herder in Mongolia's remote steppe who takes his young son to a mobile pre-school by horseback – something that was unimaginable when he was a child.

But despite this too many children are still left behind. We are not mobilising sufficient resources to meet the

promises made at the World Educational Forum in Dakar in 2000 – that all children will be able to attend a full cycle of quality education that prepares them for life and work. As the Global Campaign for Education tell us: 'There remains a dramatic global divide not only in access to education, but also in learning achievement. International learning assessments reveal a major divide between richer and poorer countries. Unless urgent action is taken, tentative progress made in the field of education over the last 8 years will be undermined and another generation of children will be condemned to a life of poverty, hard labour and ignorance.'

## Our support for the open letter to the G8 and recommendations for the Global Fund

In an open letter which will be sent to the leaders of the G8 countries ahead of the G8 summit in L'Aquila (which runs from the 8th to the 10th of July this year) moral leaders headed by Desmond Tutu have called on the G8 to revitalise their commitment to Education for All by creating a fully resourced Global Fund for Education.

It is crucial that we show support for this move in the UK through the media in order to put further pressure on the Prime Minister to respond to the demand. We urge the UK government to demonstrate once again its leadership on education for all by pushing to establish the Global Fund swiftly and with full funding.

This fund must:

- Be truly global, attracting all donor countries
- Be transparent and open to civil society input along the lines of the current Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
- Build on current Education for All infrastructure, developing from the Education for All: Fast Track Initiative and therefore helping donors to support comprehensive country education plans and strengthen country systems
- Be independent of other bodies, such as the World Bank, so that it can be flexible enough to work in quickly-changing environments such as states in conflict, which are home to over 50% of the world's out-of-school children.

For more information about why we need a Global Fund for Education and what it should look like, see the Global Campaign for Education's briefing paper at <http://www.campaignforeducation.org/docs/reports/GFE%20paper.pdf>