

Successes of the FTI: The case of Madagascar

The Education for All: Fast Track Initiative was established in 2002 to coordinate donor efforts towards Education for All and to ensure that donor's activities support country-led education plans and reinforce rather than undermine country systems. The Initiative has had a huge impact on the lives of children such as Tsitohaina Rabemanantsoa, whose story is below. At the same time, large groups of children are still not being helped by the FTI, due to the huge funding shortfalls as well as to the failings that the FTI still struggles to overcome. If we can mobilise more resources for Education for All, we will see more success stories like Tsitohaina's. We must renew the global promise to provide education to all children, keeping in mind the successes of the FTI and aggressively tackling its failings.

'On school holidays, nine-year-old Tsitohaina Rabemanantsoa takes turns with her brothers and sisters selling fritters and sandwiches during local festivals in the village of Ambohimandroso in Madagascar. She has no difficulties taking orders from the clients and giving back the change, even when they pay with banknotes of 5,000 ariary, the second-highest note in local currency.

"She is in the third grade of primary school, and she is pretty good in mathematics," her mother, Bako Rabemanantsoa, says proudly. Tsitohaina is the second youngest of the family's eight children. Her father hopes to see her succeed in school. "I hope she will go to high school," says her father, Bernard Rabemanantsoa, "it will allow her to have a better life than us." One of Tsitohaina's older siblings never went to school, three attended two years of primary school, and two did not go beyond the fifth year. Tsitohaina's parents are farmers and, occasionally, street vendors, who often have difficulties making ends meet. Their older children could not continue their education due to financial hardship.

But since primary school fees were abolished in 2003, Bako and Bernard have not had trouble sending their two youngest children to the village school. "The state provides school bags and school materials, which considerably reduces our expenses" says Bako. "Currently, all the children of the village, even those from very poor families, attend school," added Bernard, who is also the president of the parent-school association.

The same positive trend can be seen throughout the country. In a 2007 report, FTI partner agency UNICEF mentioned that the "vast reform of basic education started in 2003 within the framework of the Education for All program, led to a significant increase in primary school participation." The total number of children enrolled in primary school increased from 2 million in 2000-2001 to 4 million in 2006-2007. The completion rate—the percentage of children completing their primary schooling compared to the total number of children—increased from 30 percent in 2000 to 57 percent in 2006.

Madagascar received US\$145 million from FTI's Catalytic Fund for the period 2005-2011. Since the number of children attending school has steeply increased, the grants are used to train and hire new teachers, build schools, and improve the quality of education in general as part of the education sector plan.

The Malagasy government also invested in the recruitment of community teachers. Their number surged from 8,300 in 2003 to 28,840 in 2006-2007. Consequently, the student teacher ratio decreased from 60 to 52, with the government planning to further decrease it to 40 over the next few years. Critics, however, point out that the qualifications of teachers were lowered, negatively affecting the quality of education. Despite several measures to improve the quality of learning, the repetition rate remains high. "Compared to 30 percent in 2003, the current 19 percent rate of class repetition is a good result, but it is still a high number," says Harimanana Rakotoarisoa, director at the Malagasy Ministry of Education.

To counter class repetition, the ministry is developing a comprehensive in-service teacher training system to improve the qualifications of teachers. Repetition, however, can also be the result of external factors, such as malnutrition and the precarious health situation of many children.'

From: '[A Fast Track to Education: Sounds from the Classroom](#)', Fast Track Initiative, 2009.