

BACKGROUND 1 – October 2007

The Fast Track Initiative

The Fast Track Initiative (FTI) was launched in 2002 as a global partnership between donor and developing countries to ensure accelerated progress towards the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015.

All low-income countries that demonstrate serious commitment to achieve universal primary completion can receive support from the FTI.

The FTI is built on mutual commitments. **Partner countries** have put primary education at the forefront of their domestic efforts and develop sound national education plans. **Donors** provide coordinated and increased financial and technical support in a transparent and predictable manner.

The FTI is supported by more than 30 bilateral, regional and international agencies and development banks.

The FTI is open to all low-income countries demonstrating serious intent toward achieving universal primary completion. As of January 2007, the following 31 countries

*In **Gambia**, an initial £2.2 million enabled the country to purchase thousands of textbooks for grades 1 to 4, resulting in a significant impact on the quality of education for poor schools in rural areas.*

have had their education plans endorsed, and are receiving support from FTI: *Albania, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Djibouti, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan, Timor Leste, Vietnam, and Yemen.*

It is expected that over the next two years there could be as many as 60 countries within the FTI Partnership. However, successful expansion of FTI will require greater financial commitments by donors and greater action toward reform by recipient nations.

*In **Yemen**, the initial £4.5 million from the FTI will be used to increase the quality of education and the enrolment of girls (age 6–14), especially in rural areas, where only 30% currently attend school. This includes hiring female teachers, building a rural training institute, and providing teacher housing. Contracts are underway for building 86 new schools; student kits to encourage enrolment are being distributed; and 14,000 teachers have been newly trained.*

THE CATALYTIC FUND

The Catalytic Fund is a multi-donor trust fund managed by the World Bank on behalf of donors. Its purpose is to provide transitional financial

assistance to FTI countries that have completed a Poverty Reduction Strategy and whose education sector plans have been endorsed by donors through the FTI review process, but which have difficulty mobilizing additional external funding at the country level due to a relatively limited donor presence.

Support from the Catalytic Fund can enable countries to begin scaling up the implementation of their sector programs and establish a track record of performance that will help to attract longer-term predictable support from existing or new donors.

To date, 23 countries have received grants from the Catalytic Fund. Total pledges and commitments (2003–2009): **US\$ 1.2 billion**.