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TRANSFORMED GOVERNANCE AND THE EDUCATION FOR ALL-FAST TRACK INITIATIVE

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Executive Summary

The Education for All-Fast Track Initiative (FTI) grew out of the “New Focus on Education for All” communiqué of the G-8 when Canada hosted the summit in 2002 at Kananaskis. As Canada prepares again to host the G-8, and Korea assumes leadership of the newly-empowered G-20, it is a valuable moment to revisit and re-think the current global education architecture. By adopting some of the recommendations from the recent independent evaluation of the FTI and borrowing some lessons from global partnerships in other sectors, the FTI could set a new course toward the achievement of universal basic education. The FTI should broaden and strengthen the role of diverse stakeholders from developing countries and civil society in its governance structure in order to fully harness the energies of these stakeholders in resource mobilization and effective implementation.

Evolution of the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative

In 2002, at the Kananaskis Summit in Canada, the G-8 committed to “A New Focus on Education for All.” The G-8 leaders pledged to “significantly increase the support provided by our bilateral aid agencies to basic education for countries with a strong policy and financial commitment to the sector”¹ and catalyzed the creation of a new global partnership with the World Bank and key UN agencies that came to be known as the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative (FTI). Since its inception, the FTI has evolved from an entity formally guided by an annual partnership meeting, to a steering committee without substantial authority over funding decisions, to a unified structure of board governance.

The original framework for the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative was that it would be governed by an FTI partnership meeting charged with setting the strategic policy direction for the FTI and reviewing major issues related to progress toward universal primary school completion. The partnership meeting included donors, FTI recipient countries, non-governmental organizations and UN agencies.² The partnership meeting was an annual event until 2006 when it shifted to a bi-annual event. In 2007, although many donors agreed that the partnership should retain the decision-making authority for the FTI around bigger picture issues, the partnership meeting moved away from a central decision-making role to become more of a high-level forum for exchanging ideas and lessons learned.

Although the original conception of the FTI also established a Steering Committee, its function was merely to give “operational direction” to the FTI Secretariat in between partnership meetings. It was not initially conceived as the ultimate governing board of the FTI partnership. Its founding membership consisted almost entirely of donors: two co-chairs from a G-8 and non-G-8 country, the most recent outgoing co-chair, the World Bank and UNESCO. After its launch, the Steering Committee was expanded to broaden its representation of other stakeholder groups, ultimately including three representatives from civil society and three representatives from developing country partner countries.

In 2009, the FTI transitioned the Steering Committee into an expanded Board of Directors and the composition again became more heavily weighted toward the donors. The current FTI Board includes six donor representatives, four multilateral agency representatives, four developing country partner representatives, two civil society representatives selected by their respective constituencies and one additional representative selected by the other board members.³ All final decisions regarding funding allocations remained in the hands of exclusively donor committees that oversaw the key trust funds, the Catalytic Fund and the Education Program Development Fund.

In 2010, the FTI Board took a decision to unify all funding allocation decisions of the various trust funds under the single structure of the Board which would eliminate the exclusively donor governance of the Catalytic Fund and other trust fund committees and move the FTI toward a more unified governance structure.⁴ However, the current overweighting of donors relative to developing countries and civil society representation on the Board makes this decision less of a breakthrough in terms of shifting beyond a donor-led model of governance.

At the country level, the central institution for the FTI is generally the Local Donor Group, consisting of representatives of both bilateral and multilateral donors. The Local Donor Group is centrally

involved in evaluating and endorsing national education plans for participation in the FTI and also often involved in the disbursement of funds to country partners. In late 2008, the FTI moved to explicitly outline responsibilities for the broader Local Education Group, which involves stakeholders beyond donors in its process.

As the FTI has evolved from a partnership formally led by the broad representation of an annual meeting to one led by a unified Board, it has failed to expand the representation of diverse stakeholders on its Board in such a way as to maintain the initial spirit of participation and engagement from all sectors to achieve education for all. Moreover, the current FTI governance structure reflects a donor-led model where there is only a limited relationship between the level of effort or contribution of donors and the scale of their role in the governance structure. Recapturing the initial participatory spirit and realigning donor incentives to contribute to the FTI are both critical to leveraging the required resources and mobilizing the essential stakeholders toward the FTI's core objective of universal primary education.

Independent Evaluation of the FTI and Models for Reform

The recent independent “Mid Term Evaluation of EFA Fast Track Initiative” highlighted a number of weaknesses of its governance structure and suggested that the FTI could learn lessons from other global partnerships. The evaluators determined that many of the weaknesses of the FTI are design flaws, which have led it to fall short of its original ambitions. At the country-level, the FTI was characterized as a weak partnership because of the lack of a genuine country-level compact in many cases.⁵

The evaluators found that substantial weakness in the FTI was linked to its governance and especially the imbalance between donors and country partners. One of the central recommendations of the independent evaluators was that there should be stronger partner country representation, including in financial decisions. At the country-level, the evaluators found that Local Education Groups needed to be more representative of broader stakeholders in order to strengthen country ownership.

One of the core findings of the evaluation with respect to governance is that the FTI failed to learn important lessons of governance and management from other global partnerships. Among the existing partnerships that FTI could borrow from are the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Both of these partnerships have adopted innovative structures for including diverse stakeholders beyond traditional donors in the core governance of the partnerships.

The GAVI Alliance Board is unique in the significant role that it gives to foundations, the private sector and technical experts along with traditional donors and multilateral organizations such as UNICEF. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the vaccine industry from both developing and industrialized countries both have seats on the board. While UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the Gates Foundation and the World Bank have renewable seats, the remaining 14 seats rotate. The board always includes five developing country governments, five donor country governments, and one each for research and technical institutes, industrialized country vaccine industry, developing country vaccine industry and civil society groups.⁶

GAVI has been extremely successful in involving the private sector and foundations as fully engaged partners as well as in becoming a leading recipient of innovative finance streams because of this participatory structure. However, with just a single seat for civil society organizations, the GAVI Board has been less successful at fully harnessing the energy and support of many civil society organizations at the global and country levels.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria goes beyond GAVI in broadening multi-stakeholder participation in its governance structure and also organizes these diverse constituencies to maximize effective participation. The Global Fund, like GAVI, includes the private sector and foundations on its board, but it also provides for a wider representation of civil society groups and a greater role in governance for developing country governments. In addition to civil society representation from the global North and the global South, the Global Fund also includes the most directly affected communities of people living with AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria on the board. However, the Global Fund only includes other multilateral partner organizations as ex officio members of the board without voting rights.

Another governance innovation of the Global Fund is the way that the organization of these diverse stakeholders and its decision-making rules foster maximized participation and broad consensus. Instead of having a single representative from a given foundation or civil society group, the constituency model establishes a full fledged delegation with a communications focal point so that participation reflects the sectors and regions more broadly. The Global Fund also divides its board members into a donor bloc and a recipient bloc in order to ensure that important decisions are supported by both groups rather than shallow majorities of either one. Major decisions of the Global Fund are usually based on consensus but, in the absence of consensus, concurring majorities are required such that both the donor bloc and the recipient bloc must demonstrate two-thirds support of those present for a controversial decision.⁷ The Global Environment Facility similarly requires concurrent 60 percent majorities based on both the overall membership of the board and total contributions.⁸ Furthermore, the roles of chair and vice-chair of the Global Fund board are distributed between the donor and recipient blocs so that leadership of the board is also shared among diverse stakeholders.

The other innovative dimension of the Global Fund's governance that could inform the FTI is its structures and processes at the country-level. In order to receive financing from the Global Fund, a country's proposal must be the product of a multi-stakeholder country-coordinating mechanism (CCM). The CCM must include participation by civil society groups, people living with the diseases and the private sector in order to ensure that country proposals are not simply government strategies without broader support and ownership. In fact, the CCM representatives decide who will be the principal recipient of the funds; in many cases the recipient is not the government, or is not the government alone, but rather a joint public-private implementation effort.

Toward a New Governance Structure for FTI

At the global level, the FTI should move toward a governance structure that involves donors, developing countries and civil society as equal partners in both representation and decision-making on the FTI Board. Constituencies should be organized to maximize participation from each sector rather than to empower only individual representatives from a given constituency. Donor influence on the Board should be linked to the contributions by these donors to meet the financing needs of the FTI. Major decisions should require support from donor, developing country and civil society constituencies in order to ensure a well-balanced and participatory partnership.⁹ In addition, decision-making processes should be formalized within the Board so that clear decision-points are established and the process of decision-making becomes more transparent to all.

The FTI Board should be reconstituted into equally represented donor and implementer blocs with equal voice in decisions over the future of the partnership. Each bloc could have eight seats and these seats would reflect the diversity of donors and implementers engaged in the partnership. The donor bloc would include not just bilateral donor governments but also key multilateral organizations, foundations and the private sector. The implementer bloc would include not just developing country governments, but also civil society groups from the North and the South, and representatives from directly affected communities.

Donor Bloc: The donor bloc should be organized to include as many bilateral donors as are engaged in the partnership by allocating shared donor seats based on the basic education contributions of these donors. Based on contributions to the FTI in recent years, one could currently imagine an Anglophone seat for the United Kingdom, Canada, Ireland and Australia, a seat for Northern European donors such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium and Norway and a seat for other European donors such as Spain, Italy, France, the EC and Germany. In addition, a seat should be reserved for possible new donors to the FTI, including the United States and emerging donor nations within the G-20. Any initial allocation of seats should be regularly re-evaluated to ensure a current correspondence between the contributions of donors and their representational structure. Along with bilateral donors, there should be a seat reserved for foundations, one for the private sector, and two for multilateral donors that would be shared among key partner organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF.

Implementer Bloc: The implementer bloc would reflect expanded representation for developing countries and civil society within the governance of the FTI. Instead of having individual developing countries serve as representatives, the Board should establish seats based on representation of regional constituencies and provide technical and financial support of developing country participation. The regional allocation should include two seats for Africa, the most directly affected continent, divided between East and Southern African countries and West and Central African countries. The other two developing country government seats should encompass the other key regions in which FTI works to ensure both a breadth of representation and correspondence with the countries and regions most affected by the Board's decisions.

In the case of civil society, the Board should move beyond representation by international organizations to include representation from parents, students and teachers from the countries in which FTI works. Parent associations, student organizations, and teacher unions could serve as the core pool for involving affected communities in the governance of the FTI. In addition to the two seats for these affected communities, global civil society groups from both the North and the South should each have one seat to connect the FTI with broader advocacy and implementation efforts in the education sector.

Decision-making: Major decisions by the Board should require two-thirds support from each bloc. While this requirement could be seen as an obstacle to effective decision-making, its outcome, as evidenced by the Global Fund and the Global Environment Facility, is more likely to be through negotiation as part of a consensus process because of the stronger incentive to reach consensus and avoid controversial decision-making. At the same time, the constituencies in the implementing bloc should be supported with technical and financial resources from the FTI Secretariat in order to ensure effective participation within each constituency. Although the Board members should be selected by the constituencies themselves, requiring and providing resources for a communication focal point for each of these constituencies could help broaden the representation within each constituency.

Transforming the governance structure of the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative is but one among many steps needed to catalyze the resources and commitment needed to achieve universal education, but it may well be an essential pre-condition. 2010 will be the defining year for the international community's commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015 since all those children must enroll this year. Without a global education architecture that fully engages and harnesses the energies of all the diverse stakeholders needed to achieve this objective, the FTI is unlikely to be able to deliver on its ambition and the G-8 and the international community will not be able to deliver on the promises made to the world's children at the start of the 21st century.



Endnotes

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3. Education for All-Fast Track Initiative, “Governance of the Partnership,” March, 2009.
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5. Cambridge Education et al. “Mid Term Evaluation of the EFA Fast Track Initiative,” Draft Synthesis Report, November 2009.
6. By-Laws of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation, as Amended on October 29-30, 2008.
7. By-Laws of The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, as Amended on May 5, 2009.
8. Global Environment Facility, “Rules of Procedure for the GEF Council,” July, 2009.
9. David Gartner, “A Global Fund for Education: Achieving Education for All,” August 28, 2009.