

LINDA ENGLISH

FTI / EFA

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Remarks by Linda English Deputy Head, Fast Track Initiative Secretariat

Honorable Ministers, Ms EZEKWESILI, friends

It is a great honour for me to represent the Fast Track Initiative at this important conference on “Sustaining the Education and Economic Momentum in Africa”

The FTI is a successful Global Partnership Program that aims to have all children completing primary school by 2015. Since 2002 and working with governments, donors and civil society the FTI has

- Put 18 million children in school
- Endorsed 37 education sector plans by local education groups,
- Has become a model for aid effectiveness and donor harmonization
- Provided Catalytic Funds to 30 education sector programs totaling \$1.2 billion
- Supported capacity building through the Education Program Development Fund in over 50 countries to develop education sector plans and build strategic capacity and innumerable events to share knowledge and build capacity, including this conference.

Education is transformational for the individual. We all know that. In this room we are all educated. At the country level also we know that strong learning outcomes will lead to higher growth, better maternal and child health, lowers the incidence of AIDS, reduces poverty and is instrumental to reach the other MDGs. The FTI is convinced that FTI Catalytic Fund projects can be a good investment for a countries development

While significant progress has been made over the past 6 years, visualizing getting all the 45 million children who are not out of school in Africa completing primary school makes seems daunting.

There are however viable and tested strategies that make schools more effective and strengthen poor children's ability to learn. These include

- school feeding and de-worming programs
- putting schools within 1 km of where children live
- training teachers how to teach children to read
- providing dormitories for children in isolated areas (Mongolia, Djibouti)
- establishing early childhood programs in poor regions,
- teaching in national languages in the first years of school
- providing grants to schools for purchasing books, equipment and school repair
- assessing learning outcomes
- ensuring handicapped children can go to school.

And yes education already accounts for about 25% or more - of government budgets.

These strategies are often innovative, cost money and require considerable changes in (i) government financial management systems; (ii) personnel procedures and (3) in general, decentralizing and deconcentrating financial and personnel management to schools, It means big changes in how business is carried out in the education sector.

Where we are

The FTI Catalytic Fund is now starting a replenishment campaign aiming to raise \$1.2 billion for the countries we are expecting to request Catalytic Fund Grants in the next 18 months. We estimate that this will put an additional 17 million children in school. Our medium term goals, of course, are much greater.

Our big challenge. And when I say our I mean " all of us" , How TO MAKE THE FTI and the CATALYTIC FUND MORE CATALYTIC in attracting additional resources to the sector. How do we finance the rapid expansion of school systems and the massive increase in teachers in the short run so that in 8 years children will

complete primary school? Specifically, how can we provide predictable long-term recurrent financing to education budgets?

The FTI wants to work collaboratively with donors and governments to find viable solutions to obtaining long-term predictable recurrent financing. If education is such a good investment can we not tap into long term capital markets? For example, could we think of education bonds, guaranteed by donors and allowing countries to draw down on a declining rate as a means to finance the initial large bulge in recurrent budgets? We will be working with bilateral and multilateral donors to figure out how to provide loans and grants on more appropriate terms for rapidly expanding education systems. Quickly expanding education systems requires a different kind of financing mechanism than building roads and yet paradoxically, loans and projects for education use the same 1 or 3 to 5 modalities and mechanisms as for roads. We need to be creative.

At the FTI Secretariat, we are setting up a task team to devise responses to these questions and would like to collaborate closely with Ministers of Finance and Education to build the case for more flexible support for recurrent or operational budgets and to think through the accompanying institutional and accountability mechanisms.

I am looking forward to the discussions over the next few days to learn from you what can be done to sustain the commitment for education in Africa and to garner the leadership forces that are needed so children like Fatima Diaby in Dikoudougou Cote D' Ivoire, Peter Ngosi in Shikoko Kenya or Aminata Fall in Touba Senegal can become farmers, dressmakers, teachers, nurses, doctors, journalists, writers, artists, singers, scientists, or economists.

Thanks you