

**GLOBAL MARCH AGAINST CHILD LABOUR/ICCLE'S ASSESSMENT OF
FAST TRACK INITIATIVES IN GHANA**

***A REPORT ON GHANA'S PROGRESS TOWARDS
ACHIEVING THE EFA GOALS***

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1.0 Introduction

The Education for All - Fast-track Initiative (FTI) is a global partnership between donor and developing countries to ensure accelerated progress towards the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015. The FTI “compact”, based on mutual accountability, aims to provide the incentives and resources to empower poor nations to build and implement sound education plans. Developing nations are responsible for taking ownership of crafting national education plans, with budget accountability and a greater commitment of political and financial resources, while donor nations commit to providing the additional technical know-how and funding required ensuring that no nation that met its obligations would fail for lack of resources or technical capacity. All low-income countries which demonstrate serious commitment to achieve universal primary completion are thus eligible for support under the FTI¹.

At its inception, FTI was created as an instrument to help low-income countries close four gaps: finance, policy, capacity and data. In addition to increasing resources, FTI is helping to address the other gaps through support for the development of comprehensive sector wide education plans and by strengthening efforts to better track progress towards the EFA goals, including primary completion rates.

The implementation of the FTI is in recognition of the significant role education plays in poverty reduction. Education lays the basis for sustained growth and provides people with “human capabilities”² Education also has implications for key developmental indicators such as better health, empowerment and good governance.³ The attainment of EFA goals goes beyond access to education. Education quality is the critical ingredient in boosting economic growth. In addition, the achievement of Universal Primary Completion (UPC) is regarded not as an end, but as a first critical step towards lifelong learning which embraces secondary education and beyond. One of the key FTI objectives, then, is to help countries develop sound, inclusive strategies to accelerate progress towards good quality education. Ghana was among the first 20 countries to have benefitted from the FTI by January 2004. The focus of the FTI is the implementation of sustainable policies to ensure faster progress towards UPC and the mobilisation of additional financial resources, both domestic and external, in support of UPC.⁴

The 2006 EFA Global Monitoring Report highlights the need for education to be all inclusive, responding to the diverse needs and circumstances of learners⁵ and giving appropriate weight to the abilities, skills and knowledge they bring to the teaching and learning process. It is thus essential that education systems reach out to all children whatever their circumstances, situation, sex, origin, religion or culture. Out of school children or children who are dissatisfied with the quality of education are compelled to enter labour market with no skills. They thus become vulnerable to exploitation and lose

¹ <http://www.fasttrackinitiative.org/content.asp?ContentID=958>

² Sen, Amartya, 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Alfred Knopf, New York

³ World Bank, 2004. *Education For All (EFA) Fast Track Initiatives. Progress Report*

⁴ World Bank, 2004. *Education For All (EFA) Fast Track Initiatives. Progress Report*

⁵ UNESCO 2006, *Reaching the EFA Goals: Overcoming Child Labour*, Seventh Working Group Meeting on EFA.

their right to education. This perpetuates inter-generational poverty. These considerations put a responsibility on governments and development partners to deliver quality education for ALL children. This overview of the implementation of the FTI Initiative in Ghana is part of the global effort to ensure inclusive quality education.

2.0 Objective of the Study

The objectives of this study include the following:

1. To assess Ghana's progress towards the achievement of Education for All (EFA)
2. To examine the progress of Ghana with particular reference to the World Bank Institute's Fast Track Initiative (FTI) and highlight the children that are facing social exclusion and are still not part of the national plans and resources.

We examine below the implementation of the FTI in Ghana and its contribution to achieving the EFA goals.

3.0 The Fast Track Initiative in Ghana

As indicated earlier, Ghana began the FTI in 2004. The Ghana FTI plan which sought to build on the Education Strategic Plan, focused initially on logistical support to education, equitable access to education and on the provision of quality education. In 2005, as much as \$4,000,000 was spent on the procurement of textbooks. Furthermore, 31 (6-units) teacher accommodations were built in 31 deprived districts of the country. The FTI also saw the procurement of 8,280 bicycles and 1,358 motorbikes⁶. The motorbikes were expected to boost supervision at the district level. Particularly, the bikes were meant for Circuit Supervisors.

In the pursuance of the policy objectives for the education sector under the GPRS II, the FTI in 2006 focused on two major interventions reported in the 2007 Education Sector Performance Report of Ghana- a) creation of equitable access to education by all irrespective of gender, age, situation or circumstances and b) promoting quality education.

To attain the EFA-FTI objectives, Ghana introduced a cash transfer programme, the Capitation Grant Scheme in 2005 under which the government supported each child in basic education with GH¢3 per year. The government also constructed 150 3-unit classroom blocks and renovated 100 others. Classroom furniture for pupils and teachers were procured under the FTI. In order to improve the teacher supply which experiences an annual deficit of 8,500, institutional arrangements have been made to recruit and orient non-professional teachers to fill the gap. In attempting to attract and retain qualified teachers in deprived communities, 3-unit teacher accommodations are to be provided in the remaining 22 deprived districts of the country. District Assemblies are also obliged to sponsor teacher trainees who on completion will return to teach in the sponsoring district. Other aspects of the FTI in Ghana focus on teacher development,

⁶ MOESS 2007, Education Sector Performance Report

deployment and supervision; reforming management of schools' education planning; infrastructure; and partnering with parents, civic society and non-governmental organizations.

It is evident that under the FTI, Ghana has invested resources into ensuring that the EFA goals are attained. However, it is prudent to make analysis of how these initiatives have influenced the EFA goals. What follows is a discussion of the progress made in achieving the EFA goals.

4.0 Progress towards the EFA goals

EFA aspires that all children get into school and no group is excluded. Another goal is that children continue in school until at least the end of the primary cycle, and they demonstrate a measure of proficiency in reading, mathematics, and life skills. Though there are challenges for Ghana reaching Education for All goals at the destination date of 2015, Ghana has made modest gains in basic education achievement. Information in USAID Report (2006) indicates that enrolment rates increased from 57% in 1999 to 90% in 2006. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) also increased from 92.1% in 2005/06 to 93.7% in 2006/07. (MOESS 2007). This significant increase is attributed mainly to the capitation grant initiative. If this trend continues, there is the likelihood that Ghana will attain maximum enrolment before 2015.

One notes however that despite considerable improvement in Ghana's education sector over the period, progress has been uneven. It is noted that both the GER and Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) at the basic level in Ghana have been on a steady rise over the period - that is, from the 2003/04 academic year to the 2006/07 academic year. However, a close look at the GER and NER reveals that the NER is below the GER. The NER for the primary level improved over the period 2003/04 to 2006/07 academic year. The NER for the Junior High School (JHS) increased from 70.3 percent in 2004/05 academic year to 74.5 percent in 2005/06 academic year. This figure, however, dropped significantly to 52.4 percent in 2007. Besides, the report in comparing the national level indicators to the deprived districts' level indicators for the 2006/07 academic year said, "In almost all the indicators the national average is relatively better than the deprived districts." The GER for the primary level in deprived areas was 90.78% while the national level GER stood at 93.68%. At the JHS level, the GER for the deprived communities is 61.65% while that of the national level is 77.39%⁷. The trend is similar in the case of the NER. At the primary level it is 74.50% in deprived areas and 81.11% at the national level. That of the JHS is 41.56% for deprived communities and 52.43% for the national.

The 2005 Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, notes that relevant indicators selected to assess progress made under the objective of access to education show a positive trend. It explains that at the national level, gross primary school enrolment grew by an average of 4.7% between the 2001/2002 and 2004/2005 academic years. Particularly, the growth in primary school enrolment for the three deprived northern regions has been encouraging with all the regions exceeding targets set in the GPRS. However, the rate of growth was not

⁷ ISODEC (2007), Review of Trends in Public Spending for Education and Health in Ghana (2002 - 2006)."

sufficiently high for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education by 2015.

Generally, it is important to note that though there are gains in enrolment nationally; rates are still low in many places, particularly rural areas and the northern regions of the country. In northern Ghana, partly due to the increased incidence of food insecurity, more than 40% of girls at the basic level are not in school⁸. The incidence of child labour in certain parts of the country has also denied some children the right to basic education. The Ghana Child Labour Survey (GSS: 2003) indicated that 2 in 5 children between the ages of 5 years and 17 years were engaged in economic activities in Ghana. The report suggests that for all children engaged in economic activities, 52.9% were males. The child labour incidence was recorded more in the Volta, Greater, Ashanti and Central Regions of the country. Child labour usually occurs in the agricultural sector including fishing. Other areas as noted in the survey were; mining, quarrying street hawking and head portering of heavy loads.

Ghana has introduced a number of measures to reduce the incidence of child labour resulting largely from children exiting the basic education system prematurely. Access, persistence and completion at the basic education level are constrained by direct and indirect cost barriers. Under the FTI Government has sought to remove these barriers through the introduction of the fee waiver (Capitation Grant) programme mentioned above. A second complementary programme to promote retention is the introduction of a hotmeal programme, called the School Feeding Programme under which children in schools in extremely deprived communities are provided with a meal a day. Other related policies include the introduction of free bus rides for school children and the provision of learning materials.

For children who have exited and are peddling petty items on the streets, programme there are proposals to introduce alternative education delivery systems. Examples of such systems have been piloted by NGOs. One of such flexible systems is the School for Life programme under which shepherd boys are enabled to attend schools in the evening and later integrated into the mainstream education after a number of years. A similar programme enrolls children in classes outside physical (brick and mortar) school buildings and are tutored until a certain literacy and numeracy level is attained. They also are then reintegrated into the normal system.

The last major programme is government apprenticeship programme in which all school exiters are supported to acquire one year apprenticeship with selected mastercraftsmen. Government pays all costs associated with skill acquisition. These programmes are intended to reduce and eventually eliminate the phenomenon of streetism.

The nature of the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) indicates disparity except that it is narrower than it is for the other indicators. In the deprived areas the average ratio is 36.3:1 for the

⁸ Ibid

primary level while the national ratio is 34:1 for the same level. The Junior High School (JHS) level has 18.9:1 and 17.9:1 for the deprived areas and national level respectively. Deprived areas have only 42.7% of trained teachers at the primary level compared to 62.1% at the national level. Trained teachers at the JHS level in deprived areas constitute 64.2% against 77.2% at the national level. The Ghana Education Sector Review Report (2007) notes a steady rise in the enrolment of children with disabilities in special schools. It reports an increase of 52% in general enrolment of children with disability between 2001/2002 and 2006/2007. Enrolment of females with disability also increased by 67% for the same period.

A key component of GPRS II is bridging the gender gap in access to and participation in education. From the ESP and the MDG, Ghana targeted a Gender Parity Index of 1 in primary education by 2005. In 2005/2006, female enrolment rate at primary level increased by 1.3% (from 83.1% to 84.4%). It is confirmed from both the 2006 and 2007 Education Sector Performance report that there is improvement in gender parity at the primary school level but in 2006/2007, Junior High School level and Kindergarten have not seen any appreciable improvement. See Figure 1 below for female enrolment in 2005/06. As an incentive to for girls to go to school in the Northern part of the country, the GES Report (2007) indicates that 919 girls were supplied with school uniforms, bags and stationery. The report also indicates that nearly 17,000 girls were actively enrolled in different girls clubs in 8 regions. The Average gender parity for 88 districts across the country in 2006/07 was 0.88% for primary school level. The Report admits that there are challenges with achieving gender parity at the primary school level as some districts consistently recorded low gender enrolments. Extensive work is needed to achieve gender parity by 2015.

5.0 Conclusion

EFA aspires that all children get into school and no group is excluded. EFA also intends that children continue in school until at least the end of the primary cycle, and they demonstrate a measure of proficiency in reading, mathematics, and life skills. This constitutes four challenges—access, equity, completion, and learning. Modest progress is observed for Ghana in meeting these goals. However, in order to consolidate the gains there is the need to improve teacher recruitment and motivation. A report released by the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC, 2006) suggested that increasing teacher population is as important as increasing teacher quality. The report recommended expansion in the number of teacher training colleges in the country. Improved salary, accommodation and other incentives for teachers will compel teachers to maximise their productivity. As much as possible, pupils teachers in the classrooms must be provided with distance professional training programmes to regularise their teaching profession while bringing professionalism to bear on teaching and learning.

As far as child right protection issues are of relevance to access to education there is the need to strengthen policy that prohibits children from child labour and other exploitative activities. For example, the provisions of the 1998 Children's Act (Act 560) must be made to 'bite'. People who violate the provision must be prosecuted. Finally, it is

recommended that stronger community participation is required for meeting EFA goals. Parents, community structures, traditional and religious leaders must actively participate in the process of meeting the EFA goals.