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SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY
WORKING PAPER

MOVING TOWARD FREE PRIMARY EDUCATION: POLICY ISSUES AND IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

A STATE OF THE ART REVIEW

H. Dean Nielsen

Education For All Fast Track Initiative

SF AI SCHOOL FEE ABOLITION INITIATIVE

THE WORLD BANK

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NOVEMBER 2009
UNICEF POLICY AND PRACTICE

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This State of the Art Review constitutes part of the activities of the School Fee Abolition Initiative (SFAI), which aims to harness existing and experiential knowledge on school fee abolition policies and to support countries in planning and implementing such policies. SFAI was launched by UNICEF and the World Bank in 2005, and has grown to include several other major partners from bilateral and multilateral agencies as well as civil society organizations and research institutions.

A first draft of this review was written by Michael Wilson (formerly of the World Bank). It was further developed by H. Dean Nielsen, who recently retired from the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group. Reviews and comments were made by Raja Bentaouet Kattan (World Bank), Dina Craissati (UNICEF), Isabel Ortiz (UNICEF), Robert Prouty (EFA FTI), and Jee Peng Tan (World Bank).

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Executive Summary

The structural adjustment programs of the 1980s, promoted as a viable alternative to tax-based financing of public services, called for cost recovery measures such as the imposition of school fees, which ultimately became too burdensome for the poor. By the end of the decade, for political and equity reasons, governments began to move in the other direction, championing the abolition of school fees within vigorous Education for All movements; by the turn of the century, "fee free" primary education had become the preferred policy in many of the poorest countries.

To assess progress toward school fee abolition (SFA), the experiences of 32 partner countries in the Education for All Fast Track Initiative as of 2007 are examined, revealing a variety of strategies and consequences; for example, countries that introduced SFA in a well-planned and prudent manner saw both expansion in enrollments and little to no reduction in quality as measured by pupil-teacher ratios.

Recognizing that school fee abolition is a bold and complex undertaking, this State of the Art Review discusses how countries have addressed relevant policy issues and implementation challenges. It concludes by articulating questions for future consideration, including queries about what to do when school fee abolition is not sufficient to engage a nation's most vulnerable children.

Acronyms

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
ANCEFA	African Network Campaign on Education For All
CT	cash transfer
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EFA FTI	Education for All Fast Track Initiative
GDP	gross domestic product
GER	gross enrollment ratio
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KHADREP	Kenya HIV/AIDS Disaster Response Project
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MS	mitigation strategies
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODA	overseas development assistance
PEDP	Primary Education Development Plan
PETS	Public Expenditure Tracking Survey
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PTA	parent-teacher association
PTR	pupil-teacher ratio
SFA	school fee abolition
SFAI	School Fee Abolition Initiative (global)
SMC	school management committee
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	universal primary education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Part 1: Introduction

1.1. User fees as a major impediment to primary education among the poor

Widespread crises in macroeconomic conditions throughout the developing world and resulting downward pressures on government spending in the late 1970s and early 1980s set the stage for the introduction of structural adjustment policies, which among other things sought increases in cost recovery for government services. A few studies and simulations by policy analysts in such institutions as the World Bank explored the extent that pent-up demand for education, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels, in a wide range of countries might be tapped for the collection of modest user fees without severely dampening education enrollments.[1] If the revenues collected could be used to expand education supply, any potential enrollment reductions could be more than offset by an increase in student places. Adverse affects of such policies on social equity could be minimized by the provision of scholarships or fee waivers for the poorest. Additionally, other researchers gathered evidence to show how payment of fees often leads clients to use services more efficiently and allows them to pressure providers for improved quality ("consumer power").[2] While analyses of cost recovery in education through user fees was being evaluated, similar work was also being performed in other areas of public services, but little attention was given to the fact that the aggregation of such fees, however small per sector, could put a severe strain on family budgets, particularly for the poor.

Evidence of the unfeasibility of cost recovery in the dire economic circumstances of the 1980s, with many sub-Saharan African countries experiencing stagnant or falling gross domestic product (GDP) growth, soon began to emerge. In 1984, for example, in the Bendel State (now Delta State) of southern Nigeria, primary enrollment plummeted from 90 percent to 60 percent in just 18 months after re-introduction of fees. Primary enrollment also fell in Mali during the late 1980s under the combined impact of rising food insecurity and the increased cost of education to parents, leading to reemergence of parental skepticism about the value of education.[3] Under school fees in this era, Vietnamese households in the lowest income quintile spent one quarter of their income to pay for one year's primary education,[4] a burden that the Government of Viet Nam has worked to ameliorate in recent years. Unfortunately, governments and development organizations were slow to react to such scenarios. In 1987, UNICEF's publication of *Adjustment with a Human Face* helped focus stakeholder attention on the negative impact of fees, particularly for primary education, and began to cast doubts on the use of fees to raise funds for education.[5] The report made one thing abundantly clear: user fees for primary education had stifled demand when a key policy objective was precisely the opposite, to stimulate it.[6]

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[1] See, for example, Thobani, 1983,*Charging User Fees for Social Services*; Mingat A. and J. Tan, 1986, "Expanding Education Through User Charges"; World Bank, 1988, *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*; and World Bank, 1986, Financing Education in Developing Countries.
[2] Hillman and Jenkner, 2004, *Educating Children in Poor Countries*.
[3] Salmen, 1990, Institutional Dimensions of Poverty Reduction.
[4] Watkins, Watt, and Buston, 2001, Education Charges.
[5] Cornea, Jolly, and Stewart (eds.), 1987, Adjustment with a Human Face.
[6] This conclusion is supported by results of a more recent study by the National Community of Women Living with

Years later, the results of a 2001 global survey on user fees at the primary school level also helped policy makers understand their effect of limiting education opportunities for the poor. The survey, conducted by the World Bank and published in 2004, showed user fees to be especially burdensome to poor families in countries experiencing slow economic growth and high inflation. Indirect costs of schooling to parents, in the form of foregone child labor, and fees imposed in other sectors such as health, utilities (water supply and electricity), and agriculture (agricultural extension), further constrained already limited family budgets. When poor families had several school-age children, they were often forced to make tough choices on whom to send, usually at the expense of girls. Also, there was rampant abuse of user fees, as when they were appropriated ("captured") by central or regional levels of government, leading to beneficiary mistrust. Finally, user fee revenues were found to vary considerably depending on macroeconomic conditions (e.g., recession and inflation). To the extent that school operations and maintenance depended on user fees, the result of economic downturns has frequently been fewer books and supplies being delivered to schools, which in turn has a negative impact on education quality. While some continued to argue that parents and communities were more likely to press for improved quality when they had a direct financial stake in school operations, it had become increasingly clear that this potential benefit was outweighed by the fees' negative impacts: restricting or altogether excluding access among the poor, and limiting the quality and quantity of schooling inputs.[7]

While user fees and their impact may be analyzed on a per sector basis, assessment of their aggregate impact on the poor, covering all relevant sectors, rarely takes place.[8] Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), drafted by governments and civil society with development agency support, and often used by such agencies as an entry point for development assistance, seldom examine the aggregate impact of user fees or even address them in a direct manner. This may be in part be due to the fact that public attention to user fee policies is episodic, only moving front and center on the political agenda when a government makes a highly publicized decision to impose – or eliminate – fees on a particular service. Moreover, there is typically no occasion that calls for discussion of user fees' impact across the board; even poverty reduction strategy sessions tend not to broach this important topic.

1.2. The call for school fee abolition

In recent years, there has been enough evidence on the negative impact of user fees on the poor that many governments, often with the support of development agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have begun to champion user fee elimination for basic public services, including primary education. Countries that moved early on to eliminate primary school fees

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HIV/AIDS, which includes the following testimony by a Ugandan woman living with HIV written for her daughter, "In 1991 when your father died … I took you to a small school called Lubega Memorial School. They used to chase you for school fees. Sometimes you miss all the term because of money" ("Remember Me", January 2006, Harper's Magazine).

[7] Similar findings were reported in the case of user fees in the health sector. A meta-analysis of existing studies in 21 countries, for example, concluded that "a majority of studies and countries experienced a negative effect on equity of access through reduced utilization following the introduction of fees and/or through the poor being most adversely affected." (James et al, 2006, *To Retain or Remove User Fees?*)

[8] Komives et al, 2005, *Water, Electricity, and the Poor* is a case in point; this study only covers one part of the user fee story (public utilities), but even in this one sector it is clear that user fee subsidies are poorly targeted and highly regressive, with the poorest families often being excluded from the receipt of services.

include Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, and Uganda. (More detailed discussion on these and other countries appears in Part 2).[9] In many cases – especially Kenya, Malawi, and Uganda – the call for elimination was initially a political strategy move with the promise to eliminate school fees functioning as a popular vote-collecting mechanism. Political decisions influenced by the timing of elections and not grounded in solid planning characterized implementation of rather tumultuous school fee elimination programs in the vanguard nations. This has led to an overall recognition that elimination of primary school fees must be carefully planned and widely negotiated if it is to make a positive and sustainable impact on access to schooling and improved student learning.

In support of this, the School Fee Abolition Initiative was launched by UNICEF and the World Bank in 2005, and has grown into a partnership between government representatives, agency partners, and research and academic institutions. This State of the Art Review presents an effort to deepen understanding of the school fee abolition movement. It focuses on recent progress, important policies issues, and current implementation challenges.

To establish a clear perspective in this review, it is important to define key terms. "School fees" are difficult to define because they vary by geographic location and time. An operational guide by SFAI notes a frequent difference between official definitions of school fees (what governments indicate should or can be collected) and what parents actually pay for sending a child to school (reality on the ground). This review will employ the SFAI breakdown of fees into direct fees and other private expenses, which is based on observations in a wide range of countries.[10] Also, as in earlier SFAI documents, this review acknowledges the importance of opportunity costs, especially for low-income children, as foregone income and from unremunerated household chores and/or work on the family farm or with livestock. The "school" part of school fees in this review generally refers to the first cycle of education, which in most countries is primary schooling, but in some places may also include lower secondary and/or early childhood education. This review focuses exclusively on elimination of primary education fees because it is at this level that the Education for All movement has declared that education should be free. The primary level is also the only level at which most governments constitutionally pledge to provide state-sponsored schooling. Furthermore, because school fee removal is increasingly becoming known around the world as "school fee abolition" or "SFA" (note the School Fee Abolition Initiative), it will be termed as such in this review. Finally, it has become clear in many countries that abolishing schools fees will not fully eliminate financial obstacles to education for children, especially those who need to work and are otherwise highly vulnerable. In their interest, this review also examines targeted social support programs and incentives linked to school fee abolition.

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[9] For in-depth discussion of school fee abolition in five African countries, see World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, Abolishing School Fees in Africa.

[10] UNICEF, World Bank, ADEA, UNESCO, IIEP, and EFA FTI, 2009, Six Steps to Abolishing Primary School Fees. Direct fees it took to be those paid directly to the school or school system (such as tuition, examination fees, activity or sports fees, building or building maintenance fees, school development fees, and boarding fees – if applicable); other private expenses included those covered by payments to commercial entities (book or stationery stores, clothiers, transport and food providers) for books, supplies, uniforms, transportations, and meals/snacks, and to PTAs or similar organizations for "voluntary" contributions.

1.3. Structure and content of this State of the Art Review

The next part of this review provides an overview of the status of school fee abolition in a select group of countries. Following that, the review presents: (a) an examination of important policy issues arising from a country's decision to abolish such fees (Part 3), and (b) a discussion of related implementation challenges (Part 4). The last part (Part 5) articulates conclusions, lessons, and further questions. The countries selected for review are the 32 that had been endorsed by the Education for All Fast Track Initiative as of 2007. To receive endorsement, the countries needed to have produced a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and launched an education sector development plan or program of sufficient strength and rigor to be endorsable by a consortium of country-based donors. Because all of these countries were committed to poverty reduction and accelerated progress toward EFA, they provide a useful lens through which the trend toward school fee abolition can be viewed. The main questions that will be addressed in this State of the Art Review are:

- What kind of progress toward school fee abolition had been made among FTI-endorsed countries? (Part 2)
- Were there any patterns that distinguished those countries adopting SFA the FTI norm? (Part 2)
- What policy issues have arisen in the adoption of SFA initiatives? (Part 3)
- What have been the main implementation challenges? (Part 4)
- What conclusions and lessons can be drawn from this review? (Part 5)

The review is based on data from the survey of user fees conducted by the World Bank;[11] documents from or about the sample countries, including such government documents as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers/Progress Reports or Education Sector Plans, Poverty Assessments (World Bank), and SFAI presentations; and other published and unpublished documents from agencies (such as UNICEF), programs (such as the Fast Track Initiative and SFAI), and academics.

[11] Bentaouet Kattan, 2006, Implementation of Free Basic Education Policy.

Part 2: Progress Toward School Fee Abolition in FTI-Endorsed Countries

This section examines experience with school fee abolition in the 32 countries endorsed by the EFA Fast Track Initiative as of 2007.[12] Of the 32 FTI countries, 19 are from Africa, 6 from Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 4 from Asia, and 3 from Latin America. As mentioned above, these countries were selected for review because, as FTI partners, all have demonstrated their commitment to improving access to education among the poor and have made data on their education plans and programs accessible. Even with these baseline prerequisites, within the countries there are considerable variations in school fee abolition. The sample is admittedly highly skewed toward Africa and includes only low- or lower-middle-income countries, which is what FTI supports. While adding more non-FTI countries would have provided additional lines of comparison and reduced Africa's predominance within the review, it also would have complicated the design beyond the scope of this study and thus will be left to future analyses.[13] The Annex provides country-level information as of the end of 2006, organized according to the countries' progress toward reaching the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary school completion by 2015.[14]

2.1.Adoption of school fee abolition policies

The document search for this review reveals that just over half (17) of the 32 FTI-endorsed countries had adopted a policy of school fee abolition as of 2005, as shown in Figure 2.1 bars for "Total." Looking across the regions in Figure 2.1, it is clear that most of the SFA-adopting countries were in Africa (15 of the 17); the other 2 were in Europe/Central Asia (1) and Asia (1); there were none from among the FTI countries in Latin America or the Middle East/North Africa. From another point of view, over 80 percent of FTI-endorsed countries in Africa had adopted SFA policies, whereas 25 percent or less had in other regions of the world. The 3 countries in Africa not having adopted SFA policies were in the francophone West Africa subregion.

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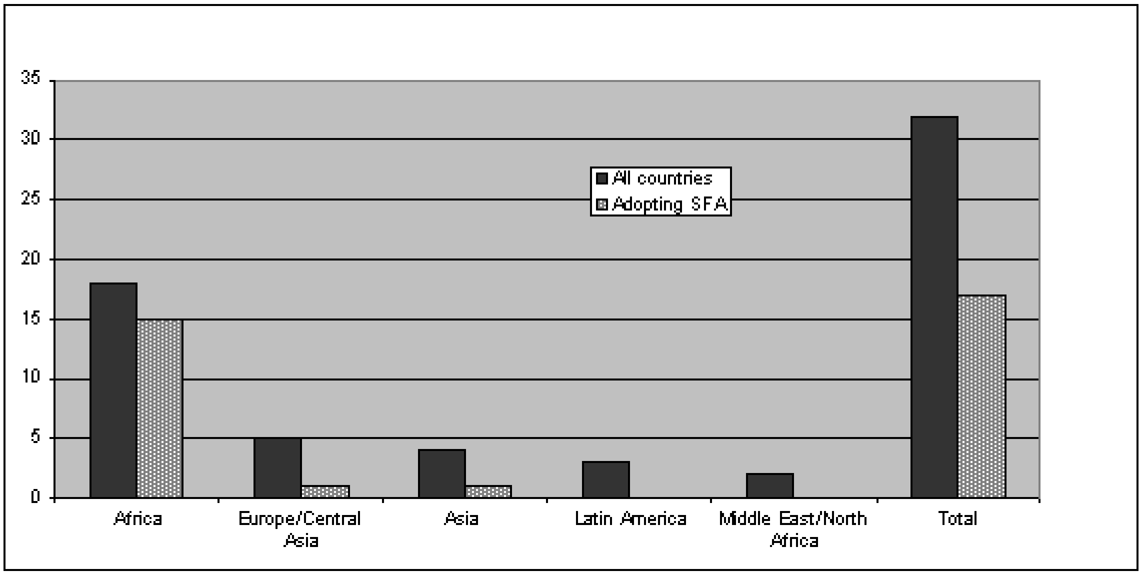
[12] In 2002, the World Bank and UNICEF, together with development partners launched the Education for All Fast Track Initiative. FTI is a global partnership to support low-income countries in their efforts to meet the education-related MDGs and the EFA goal that all children complete a full cycle of primary education by 2015. Through the FTI compact, developing countries commit to designing and implementing sound education plans, while donor partners commit to aligning and harmonizing additional support around these plans. Funding is channeled through existing bilateral and multilateral conduits and also through the FTI Catalytic Fund, which supports countries that don't have sufficient resources to implement their sector plans (see www.education-fast-track.org). Since 2007, another six countries have become FTI-endorsed, as follows: Central African Republic, Haiti, Lao PDR, Nepal, Sao Tome and Principe, and Zambia (a complete list of countries having FTI-endorsed sector plans as of 2007 appears in the Annex).

[13] UNICEF, within the framework of SFAI, is presently developing a database that will help to that effect.

[14] Based on 2005 data presented in Annex I, EFA Fast Track Initiative, 2007, *Quality Education for All Children*.

Figure 2.1. Number of FTI countries adopting SFA policies, by region



SFA adoption also appears to be correlated with countries' income levels. According to the World Bank 2007 classification, 21 of the 32 FTI countries were low-income countries and 11 were classified as having lower-middle incomes.[15] Of the 21 low-income countries, 14 (66 percent) had adopted a school fee abolition policy by 2005, and of the 11 middle-income countries, only 3 (27 percent) had done so. This variable is closely intertwined with the region, given that all but one of the low-income countries adopting school fee abolition are African. One cannot tell from this analysis whether regional or income level is more important in a country's decision to adopt SFA policies, but what is clear is that SFA policies are relatively popular among low-income, FTI-endorsed countries in South and East Africa.

As mentioned in Part 1 of this review, widespread dissatisfaction with cost-recovery policies, including user fees, and the political determination to remove such barriers to primary schooling are relatively recent phenomena. This review shows just how recent, at least among FTI-endorsed countries. As can be seen in the last column of the Annex, adoption of SFA policies took place in a majority of FTI countries (14 of 17) during the early years of the current decade (2001–2005). Twelve of the 14 countries were in Africa, showing especially strong recent movement in that region among FTI countries.

SFA can also be viewed in relation to country progress toward the universal primary school completion MDG. With only 32 cases, the size of many cells in the analysis is quite small, making it imprudent to draw strong conclusions. However, as seen in Table 2.1, there are some discernable trends.

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[15] World Bank, "Data & Statistics," online at web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,contentMDK:20421402~pagePK:64133150~piPK:64133175~theSitePK:239419,00.html

Table 2.1. Countries having SFA policies and/or mitigation strategies (MS), by MDG status

Region	Achieved or on-track			Off-track/Seriously off-track		
Policy	*All*	*Having SFA*	*Having MS*	*All*	*Having SFA*	*Having MS*
Africa	4	4	1[a]	12	9	5[c]
Europe/Central Asia	4*	0	3	2	1	1
Asia	3*	1	3[b]	0	0	0
Latin America	2	0	2	0	0	0
Middle East/North Africa	0	0	0	2	0	1
Total	**13**	**5**	**9**	**16**	**10**	**7**

***** One country could not be classified on SFA policy. [a] This country also has an SFA policy. [b] One of these countries also has an SFA policy. [c] Three of these countries also have an SFA policy.

Adoption of SFA is highest (10 of 16, or 62 percent) in countries that are "off-track" or "seriously off-track." Conversely, adoption is much lower in countries that have achieved the universal education MDG or are "on-track" to achieving it (5 of 13, or 38 percent). Again, African countries dominate the analysis. They also compose most of the countries that are off-track or seriously off-track and within this category have adopted SFA at a higher than average rate of 75 percent. On the other hand, African countries are only about one quarter of the countries that are on-track, but even the on-track countries are practicing SFA. In short, African countries at all levels of MDG progress have adopted school fee abolition programs. Notably, the three African countries that have not adopted SFA policies are all off-track for achieving universal primary school completion.

Table 2.2 shows use of other mitigation strategies, namely government programs for reducing the impact of school fees and related education expenses on the poor and otherwise disadvantaged. In the case of countries having achieved or being on track to achieving the universal primary education MDG, a high proportion – 9 of 13, or about 70 percent – have some kind of mitigation strategy. This is particularly notable in regions other than Africa. For the off-track or seriously off-track countries, mitigation strategies are present in 7 of 16 countries. Among the African countries, 2 employed mitigation strategies and not SFA; 3 used mitigation in addition to SFA. While it may seem counterintuitive that countries having SFA policies would adopt additional programs to mitigate education costs, official abolition of fees (as discussed in the following section, "Remaining school fees and expenses") does not always make schooling cost-free. Also, for the very vulnerable, there are many costs to schooling beyond those found in direct fees and expenses (e.g., opportunity costs to families) that require additional targeted strategies.

Table 2.2 presents a brief description of the types of mitigation strategies that have been adopted by FTI countries. Clearly, the most prevalent is direct subsidies to children or their families to cover various categories of school expenses such as books, school supplies, and uniforms. Much less prevalent but still in more than one location – 3 places each – are (a) school feeding programs, (b) cash transfers (sometimes made conditional upon school attendance) to low-income families with school-age children, and (c) extra grants to schools serving disadvantaged children. There are many other strategies found in just one country each, including contributions through NGOs, exemption of disadvantaged children from fees, mainstreaming and extra resources for children with disabilities, bilingual education for linguistic minorities, special support for refugee children, tutoring for disadvantaged girls, and government-subsidized catch-up programs for overage, out-of-school children. The last five items in the table are examples of measures often needed to attract the most vulnerable to school even when school fees are minimal.

Table 2.2. Government strategies for mitigating school cost burdens for the poor and disadvantaged, with number of FTI countries where each strategy is found

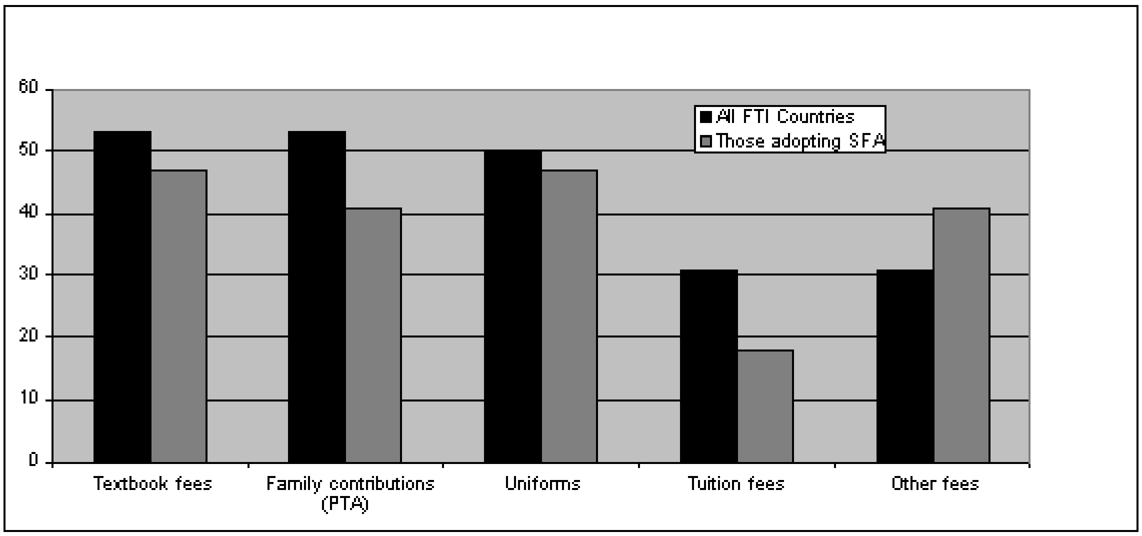
Strategies	**Frequency**
Government provides subsidies (scholarships or vouchers, cash or in kind) to girls, poor, orphans, and other disadvantaged populations for schoolbooks, learning materials, uniforms, etc.	10
Government provides school feeding program at schools serving children from low-income families	3
Government provides compensation, cash transfers, or family assistance to low-income families having primary-school-age children (often funded outside the Ministry of Education)	3
Government provides grants, or extra capitation grant funds, to schools in disadvantaged areas covering fee relief and/or learning materials and/or light maintenance	3
NGOs and donors help meet the costs of uniforms and books	1
Exemption from fees and contributions for children from poor and disadvantaged families	1
Mainstreaming and extra resources for the children with disabilities	1
Bilingual education for linguistic minorities	1
Government support for the schooling of refugee children	1
Government to provide tutoring for disadvantaged girls	1
Government offers subsidized catch-up program to older out-of-school children	1

2.2. Remaining school fees and expenses

Just because school fees are legally abolished in a country does not mean that schooling has become cost-free, at least in most of the countries reviewed here. The 2005 World Bank survey of user fees revealed that most countries called for some kind of user payment, even where school fees were formally eliminated. For the 32 FTI countries, only 4 were found to be requiring no payments at all, even though 17 were on record as having abolished school fees; some were even using the term “free primary education” (*see the Annex for details*). In Figure 2.2, which shows the percentage of FTI countries where families bear a variety of school-related expenses, the black bars represent the average for all FTI countries and the gray bars for just those having adopted SFA policies. Across the 32 FTI countries (black bars), the most common payment types – each found in at least 50 percent of the countries – were those for textbooks, uniforms, and “family contributions,” the latter usually made through a PTA for a variety of purposes, depending on the country. Official tuition fees and “other fees” are the least prevalent, at around 30 percent each.

The gray bars in Figure 2.2 show the percentage of FTI countries where school fee abolition policies have been formally adopted and the “extra” fees are still collected. In 40–48 percent of these countries, families pay for textbooks and uniforms and make family contributions – suggesting that in reality SFA does not provide much relief on such basic school expenses, at least compared to the FTI norm. Tuition fees present the largest difference, with families in only about 18 percent of SFA-adopting countries paying them compared to 31 percent of FTI countries.[16] Relief from tuition fees, however, is almost canceled out by the fact that in SFA countries there is more frequent payment of “other fees,” small fees for such things as testing and sports, which countries often use to compensate for the loss of tuition revenue.

Figure 2.2. Percent of countries where various school fees are paid (all FTI countries and those adopting SFA policies)



2.3. Some consequences of school fee abolition

Whether or not school fee abolition has actually eliminated all student fees and family expenses, the formal proclamation of “fee-free” education has often led to profound consequences both in demand for schooling, translated in increased enrollments, and, when implemented imprudently, in diminished school quality. The quality of education has often suffered when school fee abolition has not been carefully planned, resulting in such problems as overcrowding and/or scarcity of essential educational resources such as learning materials and skilled, motivated teachers. Simple proxies for consequences on enrollments and school quality are the gross enrollment ratio (GER) for the former and pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) for the latter, under the assumption that teaching and learning suffer when a classroom is overcrowded. Table 2.3 provides a brief summary of SFA policy timing and circumstances in a set of countries and a

[16] Note that in the few SFA countries where families do pay tuition fees, it is contrary to government policy.

listing of their GER and PTR over three years, separated by five-year intervals (1995, 2000, and 2005).[17] The GERs and PTRs are shaded for the years preceding and following the adoption of SFA and a percent change between the shaded years is presented. For example, Uganda enacted SFA in 1997: the shaded GERs are for 1995 and 2000, between which the change was +72 percent.

[17] These figures are based on *World Development Report* records, summarized in Edstats (World Bank, "Education Statistics," online at http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/EXTDATASTATISTICS/EXTEDSTATS/0,,menuPK:3232818~pagePK:64168427~piPK:64168435~theSitePK:3232764,00.html).

Table 2.3. Enrollment and education quality indicators in SFA countries

Note: The two shaded figures correspond with time periods surrounding SFA policy and adoption in the country and show the percent change between one period and the other.

Country	Timing and nature of SFA policy	Enrollment outcomes			Pupil-teacher ratio (PTR)		
		95	00	05	95	00	05
Malawi*	"Big Bang" in 1994 following pledge during first multi-party election. Covers grades 1–8; all types of fees (uniforms not compulsory). Little analysis prior to reform, although some prior planning during four months between decision and start of implementation.	68	134 +97%	139	61	59 -3%	N/a
Ethiopia	"Big Bang" decision in 1994, but instructions to schools one year later. Covers grades 1–10, all types of fees; minimal prior planning.	38	63 +66%	93	38	64 +68%	72
Uganda	"Big Bang" in 1997 based on election promise; all user fees, including uniforms and PTA fee collections for primary students (as many as four per household). Little advance preparation or planning; sector adjustment efforts to mobilize new resources in response to rapid expansion after launch of policy.	74	127 +72%	119	35	59 +68%	52
Kenya	"Big Bang" in January 2003, following election in 2002. Covers grades 1–8, all types of fees. No prior planning, but introduction of intense programming activities after start up.	85	98	112 +14%	30	34	40 +18%
Lesotho	Free Primary Education Program began in 2000, covering primary cycle (phased in to 2006) and all costs; included school feeding program. Careful budgeting, and planning of phased-in growth of personnel and facilities.	111	120	132 +10%	48	48	42 -12%
Cambodia	Cambodia's Priority Action Program (2000) reduced school costs for poor families. World Bank 2005 study indicates no user fees; the country's strategic education plan (2006–2010) shows the elimination of all fee collections.	N/a	106	134 +26%	N /a	50	53 +6%
Tanzania	Eliminated school fees and other user costs for primary education in 2001, using a gradual approach. Careful planning included deploying teachers to rural areas, in-service teacher training, decentralization of textbook procurement, capitation grants to school committees.	67	66	106 +61%	37	41	56 +36%
Mozambique	Decision made in 2003, effective in 2004 after testing, phased in, first grades 1–5, then 1–7, all types of fees; good prior planning, training and monitoring	90	97	113 +16%	58	64	66 +3%
Ghana	1996 plan for free UPE by 2006 not met; 2005, scaling up pilot started in 2003, focused on deprived districts. Covers grades 1–9, all types of fees (except community/PTA levies for school projects); preceded by piloting, training and strengthening of decentralized structures.	72	80	88 10%	33	35	33 -6%

*For Malawi the figures are for 1990, 1995, and 2000.

Source: World Bank Edstats, 2007, for select countries.

The countries listed in Table 2.3 are mostly FTI countries, but three other countries where SFA policies have had particularly strong consequences have been added – Malawi, Uganda, and the United Republic of Tanzania. The first four countries in the table adopted what have been termed "Big Bang" approaches, meaning that SFA was introduced mainly for political purposes without much advance planning. The others, listed in chronological order, took more deliberate, advance planning approaches. In the first three Big Bang countries, explosive enrollment resulted, expanding from 66 percent to 97 percent. In the fourth, Kenya, expansion was less dynamic, largely because primary enrollment levels were already quite high at the time of policy adoption. In two of the Big Bang countries, Ethiopia and Uganda, PTRs also increased explosively (around 68 percent), pushing them from below the FTI benchmark of 40 to around 60, on average.

In most countries where there was more prior planning or piloting, as in Lesotho and Ghana, changes in GER were moderate; for many of them this could also reflect that fact that the GER was already quite high to begin with. For these countries, the GER was raised to near or beyond 100 percent, but PTRs increased relatively little – or actually declined, as in the case of Lesotho and Ghana – suggesting maintenance of or improvements in quality. Kenya, one of the Big Bang countries, showed moderate growth in PTR during its period of expansion, perhaps due to the intensive planning of service provision just after the announcement of SFA. Finally, Tanzania showed a different pattern altogether: although phased in, its SFA led to explosive expansion between 2000 and 2005, and the PTR also expanded quite rapidly, coming to an average of more than 50. What distinguished Tanzania from the other countries was that it was careful to bolster additional contributors to school quality, such as textbook provision, in-service teacher training, and school-community support.

Summary

Adoption of school abolition policies, which was found to be quite prevalent among FTI countries, is clearly concentrated among those where financial constraints to universal education have been the most serious: low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Of the 17 FTI countries adopting SFA policies, 15 were in sub-Saharan Africa, and among those, 13 were classified as low-income in 2007. A pair of lower-middle-income African countries took this policy route, as did 2 countries in other regions, but the predominant group thus far consists of low-income countries in Africa that have recently sought to remove official financial barriers to educational opportunity for political and ideological reasons (*see the Annex*).

Because the FTI seeks to help countries accelerate progress toward universal primary school completion, this review also examines adoption of SFA policies in relation to primary school completion. A high proportion of countries that are off-track or seriously off-track in their pursuit of this goal have adopted SFA policies. Again, most of them are from sub-Saharan Africa. Among those having achieved the goal or on-track to do so, SFA policies are less prevalent, except among African countries – where SFA policies are found at all stages of progress toward universal primary completion. Without time series analysis it is difficult to assess causal patterns, but it is possible that school fee abolition policies are among the influences that have moved countries toward achievement of the primary school completion MDG.

Adoption of SFA policies is not the only means countries have used to reduce economic barriers to education; other cost-reduction (mitigation) strategies have included the provision of scholarships to vulnerable students, school feeding programs, cash transfers to student families, and grants to schools in disadvantaged areas. Such strategies are present in many of the countries not having SFA policies, especially lower-middle-income countries, and even in some that have adopted SFA (5 of 17). This suggests that some countries may not need the bold policy of fee abolition to advance their equity goals, but others need more than SFA, since official measures to abolish fees do not remove all direct costs to education, and even if they did, the extremely poor and vulnerable still have to overcome indirect and opportunity costs.

Official removal of fees has only led to a completely cost-free primary education in a handful of FTI-endorsed countries (4 of 32); yet even where family cost abatement has not been complete there have been some benefits from SFA. Families pay tuition fees in just 18 percent of SFA countries (in each case, contrary to government policies), as compared to an average of 31 percent among all FTI countries. They are, however, still obliged to pay for books and uniforms in nearly half of the countries, a proportion which is only marginally below the FTI norm. In payment of "other costs" they come out above the norm, which, at least is some countries, may be used by education providers as a means to at least partially recoup lost tuition revenues following introduction of SFA policies.

Finally, the review tracked two educational outcome indicators in relation to SFA: gross enrollment ratios (an indicator of increased access), and student-teacher ratios (a proxy for educational quality). It compiled national figures on indices in years before and after introduction of SFA policies and computed a percent change over that period. Countries where the policies were introduced without comprehensive planning and/or piloting (Big Bang countries) tended to have explosive increases in both enrollments and pupil-teacher ratios (roughly, improved access at the expense of quality). In contrast, countries making the effort to carefully plan the intervention, through staging or use of a pilot study, also experienced large increases in enrollments but often did not experience large PTR increases. In a number of instances, pupil-teacher ratios were reduced. These countries have managed, with extraordinary effort, to expand access while holding quality constant or even increasing it, which is the ultimate goal of the SFA movement.

Part 3: Policy Issues Raised by School Fee Abolition

As a bold policy initiative in support of universal primary education, SFA is often seized upon by vote-seeking politicians.[18] Even when the motivation is not explicitly political, high-level managers have pushed this policy with some urgency as a way to accelerate national progress toward EFA and MDG education goals. The problem is that SFA is a complex undertaking that cannot be done well without careful planning and policy adjustments on multiple fronts. This section addresses the following policy adjustment issues that have arisen as countries endeavor to abolish school fees.

- Providing for sustainable financing to cover lost revenue resulting from SFA and likely enrollment surges.
- Decentralizing education management and empowering communities.
- Maintaining or improving school quality in the face of changed funding flows and increased access.
- Reaching the most vulnerable groups.
- Reconciling SFA and private primary education.
- Planning for downstream education demands.

3.1.Providing for sustainable financing

Because most countries adopting SFA policies have done so for political reasons, government programs have often been assembled quickly, without careful consideration of how the policy will be sustained financially. For example, like other "Big Bang" SFA countries, Burundi decided to adopt SFA just two weeks prior to the beginning of the school year. The result was a 30 percent enrollment increase and insufficient time to marshal funds to sustain the policy.[19] Financial stability, as a key SFA concern, means realistically projecting SFA costs and lining up reliable funding sources for the foreseeable future. In countries adopting SFA policies, the sustainable financing challenge has been twofold: (a) replacing revenues lost from not collecting school fees; (b) financing resulting enrollment surges.

Replacing lost revenue

In many low-income countries, especially those where school buildings are provided and teachers are paid by the government, revenue from fee collection is not very large. Nevertheless, maintenance of school attendance among the poor is sensitive to changes in fees, even low fees. Replacing fee revenue in such countries is mainly a matter of crafting new mechanisms to channel a marginally higher level of government resources, for example, providing schools with

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[18] For cases in Africa, see Avenstrup, 2004, *Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi and Uganda.* He writes, "In each case the trigger event was a dynamic, top-level political initiative that left very little time for planning, forcing countries to adopt a "ready, fire, aim" approach … In some countries there was little time even to negotiate with stakeholders."

[19] UNICEF and World Bank, 2006, *Building on What We Know*.

grants, as in many East African countries,[20] or direct transfer of resources such as books and materials, as in Malawi.[21] In more affluent urban areas, however, capitation grants provide fewer funds to the school than community contributions previously had, leaving some communities to figure out how to maintain earlier quality standards. Box 3.1 shows how SFA can sometimes disrupt reasonable and often progressive community resource mobilization systems.

Box 3.1. Zambia: a traditional school funding pattern

School fees were abolished in 2002, including all PTA contributions. They were replaced by state-funded capitation grants meeting the costs of non-salary recurrent expenditures such as books and materials. The capitation grants are received on time by the majority of schools. However, the removal of PTA contributions may have weakened an important community support mechanism. In the past, PTA contributions met the costs of public goods that are not covered by the new capitation grants, such as latrines, desks, and office equipment. Most schools served mixed-income families, with strong community support for education. In this context, the PTAs worked out a cost-sharing scheme, based on family income, in which better-off parents effectively cross-subsidized poorer families that could not afford to contribute. Following elimination of PTA fees, better-off parents have redirected their contributions to other household priorities. If PTA contributions had not been eliminated, the overall financing level for non-salary expenditures would have been higher than at present, yet still equitable, and overall educational materials provision would have been greater.

Source: Das, Habyarimana, and Krishnan, 2005, *Implications of Budgetary Allocations for Service Delivery*.

Not all countries draw relatively little of their school funds from households. In recent years, two crisis-ridden countries, Haiti and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), have required households to cover a majority of schooling expenses, including teachers' salaries. Discussions of new fee replacement programs in the DRC have given rise to major policy dilemmas, elaborated in Box 3.2.

Experience has shown that eliminating all financial barriers to primary school attendance ideally requires governments to inventory and replace not only formally announced fees but also family expenses, sometimes called "informal fees, which are not officially collected by the government but still paid by parents. These expenses often include annual back-to-school costs such as new school uniforms, books, and school supplies, as well as contributions in cash or in kind for school construction and maintenance, often through the PTA. There are many examples of government efforts avoid burdening families with informal fees; for example, Kenya has factored the costs of books into its capitation grants; in Mozambique grants can also be used to cover school maintenance and minor repairs (*for more on education materials, see the section on "Providing more and better learning materials," below, and Box 3.6 for Kenya, specifically*). Other school systems have eliminated school uniform requirements, at least in low-income areas, or have found ways to subsidize uniforms for girls or the poor. However, few governments have been able to eliminate such expenses altogether. Under Uganda's ambitious Universal Primary

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[20] Such grants are often called "capitation grants" since they provide a certain set amount of funding per student enrolled, often with a pro-poor policy slant, e.g., higher rates for schools serving poor communities.
[21] For Malawi, see World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*.

Education Program, parents still pay for school supplies, meals, clothing, transportation, and assistance with school construction.[22]

Box 3.2. Thorny SFA policy issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Unlike most countries now championing SFA policies, the Democratic Republic of Congo has traditionally burdened families with the lion's share of financing primary schools' recurrent costs – over 80 per cent, including 50 percent of teachers' salaries. Its bold move toward free and compulsory basic education, and thus, school fee abolition, is a stipulation in both its 2005 constitution and its Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2006). This has led to serious policy concerns on the part of many stakeholders. For example, teachers assumed that the new financing scheme, in which only government revenues would be used to cover teachers' salaries, would inevitably lead to a reduction in salary levels and thus went on strike, demanding a threefold increase in compensation.

At the same time, government planners in the Ministry of Education and Finance set about working on plans to transfer funding packages to schools. But given the shortage of banks in the country's interior regions, they were forced to strategize use of a long and complex supply chain – transferring funds from one office to another and opening multiple opportunities for corruption and leakage. Accordingly, cumbersome oversight and feedback systems needed to be designed to track funds and reassure the public that planned resources were reaching schools and teachers. Finally, given the country's high reliance on external funding, efforts to align donor support for this plan were needed in addition to programs for increasing donor coordination.

Source: Updated from World Bank, 2004b, *Democratic Republic of Congo Country Status Report.*

Financing the enrollment surge.

Issues related to enrollment surge financing also vary from country to country, in part, depending on how low the baseline enrollment ratio is. Generally the lower the baseline ratio, the higher the surge, which represents the magnitude of pent-up demand prior to SFA. Whatever the size of the surge, countries will need to be able to finance increased numbers of learning materials, teachers, and classrooms. When adequate numbers are not planned for, overcrowding and loss of quality can result, as described in Part 2.

In reviewing how countries have attempted to meet this challenge, three main approaches have been identified: (a) expanding domestic funding for basic education; (b) improving efficiency of existing systems; and (c) mobilizing international financial support. Many low-income countries have chronically underinvested in education, including many that have moved toward school fee abolition. SFA and related sector-wide plans have often provided a strong rationale for increased government funding of education. For example, at the beginning of its Free Primary Education program in 2001, Kenya had a total annual budget for education of about US$700 million. During the next two years it increased its annual allocation to the sector by 19 percent and 14 percent, respectively. By 2004, the proportion of its recurrent budget devoted to education was

[22] Bentaouet Kattan, 2006, Implementation of Free Basic Education Policy.

33.5 percent, very high in comparison to the FTI benchmark of 20 percent and conflict-ridden countries such as the DRC, where it is 9 percent.[23]

In addition to increased funding, countries have coped by improving investment efficiency. Some have created new categories of paraprofessional teachers whose salaries are below previous markets rates, others have found more economical ways to construct school buildings (often contracting with community groups for such work) and save in production of learning materials (*for more details on all of these, see section on "Maintaining or improving school quality," below*). Brazil's northeast region provides one example of increased efficiency: during the 1990s, its private sector was tapped for textbook production and distribution. Publishers were selected through a well-designed competitive process, resulting in the reduction of unit costs by between 30 and 50 percent. In addition, the durability of textbooks was increased from one to two years to four years, and the quality of their content and presentation also improved considerably.[24]

External aid

As Fredriksen points out, the share of total education expenditures in sub-Saharan Africa covered by domestic financing in 2004 was on average 86 percent, despite rapid increases in overseas development assistance (ODA) during preceding years.[25] Thus, external aid plays a relatively small role, approximately 14 percent, in supporting country gains in education. Nevertheless, there are countries where ODA covers a much higher proportion of the budget; for example, more than 30 percent of Mali's annual educational expenditures in 2005 were financed by donor agencies.[26] Also, external aid often supports cutting-edge or innovative programs for which there is no government budgeting. In recent years, bilateral, multilateral, and NGO agencies have committed themselves to providing higher levels of EFA funding plus improved donor coordination and harmonization – as delineated in the Paris Declaration, among others – commitments that are at the core of the Fast Track Initiative.[27] Also, in the past 12 years heavily indebted poor countries have been given the option of converting external debt into expenditures on social services, including education. Among the countries implementing SFA, funds from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) have been prominent contributors to government education budgets: in Ghana, they were used to cover approximately one third of additional funds for universal primary education (UPE) during its first year; the Government of Tanzania used HIPC funds to help double per capita education spending; in Uganda, they were used to in raising UPE expenditure by 37 percent; and Zambia used the funds to increase government spending on education to an unprecedented 24 percent of the national budget.[28]

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[23] World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*.
[24] Read, 2007, "Textbooks and Other Learning and Teaching Materials."
[25] Fredriksen, 2007, Sustainable Financing of Education Quality in the Context of Fee Abolition.
[26] Bender et al, 2007, Evaluation of the World Bank Assistance to Primary Education in Mali.
[27] At the Dakar World Education Forum (2000), James D. Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, declared that "no country with a viable and sustainable plan for achieving Education for All will be unable to implement it for lack of external resources." (Wolfensohn, 2000, *A Time for Action*). UNESCO showed an average increase in ODA to education of about 8 percent per year over 1999 to 2005 (UNESCO, 2008, *EFA Global Monitoring Report*). Less optimistically, funding actually decreased during 2005, creating a sense that development agencies have not moved as vigorously in support of EFA as has been promised.
[28] World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*; and Bentaouet Kattan, 2006, *Implementation*

Finally, well-positioned communication of free primary education policies in some countries has inspired individuals and private groups, both foreign and domestic, to donate money. In Kenya, for example, the response to its Free Primary Education Initiative was described as "overwhelming euphoria," generating contributions to the Universal Primary Education Fund initiated by the Government.[29]

Macroeconomic conditions

The search for sustainable financing brings macroeconomic considerations to the fore. Countries that are growing rapidly, like many in sub-Saharan Africa during 1999–2004, and can increase per capita funding for education have a head start, given that most financing will come from government revenues.[30] Even some of those not growing at such a rapid pace have been able to increase domestic funding for education. For example, all but one of the eight FTI countries studied by Umansky and Crouch (2006) increased recurrent expenditures on education as a percent of their governments' budget subsequent to FTI endorsement, perhaps a consequence, at least in part, of their using a set of global (FTI) indicators in setting their financing goals.[31] Some macroeconomic conditions have also constrained education growth and development, such as ceilings on new teachers imposed in certain countries by IMF structural adjustment arrangements. Getting around them has often required arbitration at the highest levels.[32]

Careful planning

Careful planning is key to generating the required financial base for SFA. Based on experiences in sub-Saharan Africa, Fredriksen (2007) suggests a need for the following steps in planning of sustainable financing:

- Projecting supply and demand for teachers, classrooms, and pedagogical supplies as well as the geographic location of enrollment increases and existing resources.
- Analyzing trade-offs between different transitional measures in case teachers cannot be trained or recruited or new classrooms cannot be constructed in time to accommodate enrollment surges.
- Realistic costing of financial needs, including exploring more efficient ways of using existing resources, e.g., decentralized publishing of learning materials and use of multigrade teaching in remote areas.
- Sequencing or phasing in SFA over time to allow for gradual scaling up of teacher, physical (classrooms and materials), and financial resources.

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of Free Basic Education Policy.

[29] World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*.

[30] In sub-Saharan Africa over 1999–2004, national economies grew an average 4 percent per annum and the percent of GDP devoted to education increased from 3.8 to 4.6 (Fredriksen, 2007, *Sustainable Financing of Education Quality in the Context of Fee Abolition*).

[31] FTI countries are required to set goals on the proportion of their government recurrent expenditures allocated to education, among other goals or indicators within an "Indicative Framework" (see EFA Fast Track Initiative, 2004).

[32] IMF, 2000, *Key Features of IMF Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility*; for a discussion of possible negotiated flexibility in IMF conditions, see Ames et al, 2001, *Macroeconomic Policy and Poverty Reduction*.

- Creating new mechanisms to transfer funds to schools, e.g., through use of capitation or "block" grants, and through empowerment of and capacity building in community organizations such as school councils to improve management of such grants.

3.2. Decentralizing education management and empowering communities

As suggested in the last item of the previous paragraph, elimination of school fees, most of which have been collected and spent at the school level, will require new mechanisms for transferring funds to schools. Central governments could attempt to do this, but in most cases countries are opting to decentralize the transfer of funds, deferring to districts or even the schools themselves for resource allocation decisions – based on the assumption that local government bodies are more knowledgeable of their constituents' conditions and constraints and therefore better able to make funding decisions based on real needs. The element of local planning is often a key feature of such decentralization policies: schools create their own school improvement and financing plans, which are compiled by districts to create district plans.[33] Tanzania is a good example of a country that implemented decentralization alongside the introduction of SFA, as described in Box 3.3. Disbursement of funds for needed school grants was done after various policy reforms were in place, including establishment of school management committees, opening of school bank accounts to receive funds, and verified delivery of books to school sites.

Box 3.3. Tanzania: school fee abolition and the decentralization of funding

In 1999 Tanzania's education system was "broken," with primary school enrollments declining in the face of economic recession. The Government's financial effort in education was only 2.7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) compared with Kenya's 6.8 percent. The financial burden for financing recurrent costs (other than salaries) and capital expenditures fell directly on families and communities. In the face of increasing poverty, only 60 percent of user fees were being collected, contributions were falling off sharply, and the Government was failing to make up the shortfalls. In terms of classroom construction, communities were unable to build little more than make-shift shelters.

Earlier efforts to put in place a comprehensive sector development program had failed, in large part because they were donor-driven with much of the work carried out by expatriate technical assistance teams, which contributed to diminished national ownership. In 2000, with renewed donor support and increased popular protests over schooling conditions (a major issue in that year's presidential campaign), and the prospect of HIPC relief permitting increased funding of basic education, the Government moved expeditiously to develop its own sector development program, consistent with FTI guidelines and endorsed by local donor partnership. Interestingly, however, Tanzania did not join FTI.

The timing was good. The country had just completed a World Bank-supported Country Financial Accountability Assessment that pointed the way to better service delivery by focusing on improvement of the budget allocation process and of the decentralization of funds. In this context, the Government decided to reverse policy by eliminating user fees and sending replacement and additional resources to meet demand at the school level. With the commitment of the World Bank and other donors to finance the country's primary education development program (PEDP) in

[33] See India's District Primary Education Program for a good example of this (Ayyar and Bashir, 2004).

2001, the Prime Minister's Office worked with donors and stakeholder ministries (finance, education, and local government) on a simulation model to determine the level of the capitation grant (based on recurrent expenditures) and development grants (for school construction and equipment). The decision was to deposit 100 percent of funds into capitation and infrastructure accounts in local banks, controlled by school management committees, which succeeded in energizing the system.

Source: World Bank, 2001, *Tanzania: Primary Education Development Project*; and Simwanza Sitta, 2008, "Towards Universal Primary Education."

The innovative use of school management committees as recipients and managers of school grants does not mean that communities had not previously been involved in school operations and financing. Throughout the world, parent-teacher organizations have for decades supported public schools by collecting parental contributions for school use. Unfortunately, many of these funds were then frequently managed by school principals in a non-transparent manner.

Under SFA, where PTAs lose their fund-raising role, there has been an increased risk that parental engagement with the school would diminish. For this reason, it has been crucial that school systems find new roles for PTAs and other community groups. Empowering community councils to receive and manage school grants has been one way to do this. In Zambia, the PTAs, having lost their fund-raising function, have been engaged in managing the school capitation grant. When community organizations adopt this function, funds can be managed in a more open and transparent manner, e.g., through posting budgets and expenditures in public places. Even where capitation grants are not used to cover school operations (as in India), community groups can be drawn into school improvement planning.[34]

Experience in many countries has shown that getting funds to schools is not always easy. Achieving the original intent of funding transfers often requires intensive and long-term training programs for school officials at the regional, district and school levels; good local monitoring and evaluation and oversight by district offices and community groups; and establishment of transparency mechanisms to reveal whether and how funds have gone astray (*see Part 4 for challenges of implementing SFA policies*).

3.3. Maintaining or improving school quality

One of the most serious challenges faced by policy makers implementing SFA is the maintenance of school quality. The sudden loss of revenue coupled with enrolment surges will certainly strain existing resources and make it difficult to maintain previous quality of service delivery, as demonstrated by findings of burgeoning pupil-teacher ratios in many SFA countries (discussed in Part 2). In many countries, the situation is compounded by the fact that school resources were stretched beyond their limits even before implementation of SFA policies. For them, the bold move to fee-free primary education presents an opportunity to catch up on quality service delivery and engage in related system reform, as explained below.

[34] See footnote 32.

Most countries that have instituted free primary education start out on the path with inadequately trained teachers, a weak corps of administrators, large class sizes, double-shifts, outdated curricula, and a shortage of books and materials. In addition, they often lack the instruments to measure student performance and chart the path of instructional reform. Even where the implementation of free basic education has been carefully phased, low quality and related low internal efficiency (dropout and repetition) can persist. Among the many approaches to improving school quality, with or without school fee abolition, broad experience shows the following to be the most commonly employed: (a) expanding school infrastructure, e.g., more and better classrooms; (b) improving teacher supply, incentives, training, and morale; (c) providing more and better learning materials; and (d) improving management and accountability.[35]

Expanding school infrastructure. Failure to adequately plan for increased classroom demand resulting from school fee abolition has seriously undermined the quality of education in many locations. In 1997, when Uganda launched its Universal Primary Education Policy promising to eliminate user fees, it was implementing a poorly conceived/managed program of school construction that had fallen far behind schedule, due to procurement delays and overreliance on community resources. Increased domestic and international funding under its first UPE policy, and improved systems for classroom construction, led to a boom in classroom construction during the following three years. But, given unexpected continued expansion of enrollments, classroom supply fell below demand, especially in the most disadvantaged regions, resulting in average class sizes of nearly 100 in 2001.[36] Similarly, Malawi failed to make adequate provisions. Overcrowding increased dramatically, and learning conditions deteriorated as pupil-classroom ratios soared to as high as 200 in the wake of its Free Primary Education policy, levels that severely depressed teacher morale and student attendance.[37]

In 2002, Kenya decided to focus its response to the surge by providing books and materials through capitation grants, leaving school construction and maintenance to communities. Thus, while Kenya has also made a major effort toward school improvement through grants managed by head teachers and PTAs, Oxfam's 2006 study of East African countries reveals an underlying concern: "this participation should not be used as a pretext to solicit material contributions [for infrastructure improvement] from already deprived local communities." It should be noted that Kenya does provide some assistance to selected poor communities via a limited infrastructure fund, but the financial burden continues to rest mainly on communities.[38]

As difficult as it is to provide adequate classroom places, a growing body of evidence shows that schools also need to offer water and bathroom facilities to bolster school enrollment and retention, especially among girls, reduce absenteeism among both students and teachers, and promote learning.[39] Despite this, school construction programs still frequently fail to include

[35] The last quality improvement factor, "improving management and accountability" has already been treated under the previous sections "sustainable financing" and "decentralization and community empowerment."
[36] World Bank, 2004c, Uganda: Primary Education and Teacher Development Project.
[37] World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*.
[38] Oxfam and ANCEFA, 2006, *UPE Myth or Reality?*
[39] Theunynck, 2009, *School Construction Strategies for Universal Primary Education in Africa*; Gorman, 2007, "Why Water is Vital to Girls' Education"; Chaudhury et al, "Missing in Action."

such facilities: for example, in Senegal, while only 39 percent of schools had toilets and 33 provided access to drinking water, school construction programs did not contemplate increased provision of such facilities.[40] On the positive side, in India, where a UNICEF-sponsored initiative in 2,500 schools provided drinking water and toilets, together with teacher training and messages to students about hygiene, a rapid appraisal showed improved school attendance and lower dropout rates.[41]

School maintenance has also been a problem largely relegated to communities and their capacity to raise funds and in-kind contributions. Given deep poverty in non-metropolitan areas, this has generally resulted in maintenances neglect, which leads to widespread deterioration of infrastructure at precisely the time that full capacity is needed. School maintenance has been examined within a group of 21 FTI countries, resulting in some disquieting findings: (a) Even within a framework of SFA it is often assumed by educational managers that communities will continue to fund school maintenance (13 countries); (b) There is no clear recognition of the "downward curve of degradation," that eventually results in a need for school replacement; (c) Even when governments provide some funds for maintenance, they are often included in general budget categories such as "Operations and Maintenance," and are thus generally overshadowed by operating costs; (d) When communities do contribute to school maintenance, their contributions are rarely accounted for in public accounts or highlighted by public expenditure reviews and are thus not figured in SFA planning; and (e) Lack of maintenance impinges negatively on learning conditions, even in the lower-middle-income FTI countries with well-established primary school networks.[42]

What are the reasons for the lack of a pipeline of new and replacement schools and a continuing backlog of renovation and maintenance? The most important explanation appears to be that government capital budgets are underfunded and give priority to other infrastructure investments – roads, bridges, etc. – rather than to schools. Consequently, countries rely heavily on donors to finance schools since they have been responsive in the past.[43] But donor preferences are changing. Donors are now less willing than before to finance school construction. It is both time-consuming and involves slow disbursement of funds, thus unattractive to aid officials and parliaments who prioritize short-term payoffs. Parliaments in particular are often loath to vote for additional funds deployment when there are large amounts of outstanding undisbursed school construction funds. Donors are increasingly shifting their financial support to books, materials and teacher training, which are perceived to have a more direct impact on learning.

In spite of these constraints, there is still an interest in infrastructure improvement among those focused on realization of Education for All. Theunynck has analyzed many approaches to the construction and financing of primary schools in sub-Saharan Africa in the EFA context,[44] and

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[40] World Bank, 2000, Senegal Quality Education for All Project.
[41] Sey et al, 2003, Enhancing Educational Opportunities for Vulnerable People.
[42] Wilson, 2006, The Fast Track Initiative and School Facilities.
[43] The ODA database reveals a pattern for Japan's support for basic education which is clearly linked to school construction. Investment occurs every four to five years. An interesting case study would be to examine over time how much of the investment is for new construction and how much is for renovation; also, how the issue of maintenance is treated. The findings could be compared with those of a similar study of schools financed by the European Union, which has had one of the largest school construction programs in sub-Saharan Africa.
[44] Theunynck, 2009, School Construction Strategies for Universal Primary Education in Africa.

has found many examples of innovative, cost-effective programs. Especially promising are school construction programs funded by the government but managed by community groups. Because they use local laborers and materials, and have a stake in the school's quality, these programs can construct or renovate schools at a relatively low cost (by some estimates 25 percent below regular contractors). Theunynch concludes by indicating the dimensions of cost-effective school construction, as follows:

- *School planning.* Bottom-up has been more effective than top-down in matching demand with supply and can better reach the hard-to-reach.
- *School size.* Countries have rarely set standards or guidelines regarding school size, resulting in frequent mismatches between school capacity and enrollment numbers. Given general conditions of low population densities, small schools should generally be the norm, as evidenced in Africa where economies of scale for primary school construction are negligible.
- *Primary school concept.* A standard minimum package of school facilities needs to be defined at the country level, agreed upon by government and donors, covering such dimensions as minimum land size, classrooms per school, latrine ratio, and water supply, fencing, etc.
- *Primary school facility costs.* Little knowledge regarding the determinants of construction costs has been generated; such knowledge needs to be acquired and standardized.
- *School facility design.* A wide array of architectural designs has been promoted, including the classic classroom, the local material classroom, the prefabricated classroom, and the school shelter. All present distinct benefits and drawbacks; countries or regions will need to determine which are most appropriate to their needs.
- *Financing strategies.* In many African countries school construction has been donor-financed though project implementation units, which have proved to be relatively efficient but have not created long-term capacity.
- *Decentralization and community participation.* Decentralization has become one of the most important institutional shifts in Africa, yet there is often poor coordination or integration among central, regional, and community actors, often due to differences of opinion. Ministries of Education are often quite reluctant to transfer their responsibilities to local governments.
- *Primary school maintenance.* Almost no attention has been placed on this in African countries, resulting in huge costs for rehabilitation of dilapidated buildings.
- *Procurement and corruption.* In many countries, the construction sector consistently ranks among the most corrupt and is both a symptom and a cause of low government capacity. Centralized procurement offers more opportunities for corruption than decentralized community-based programs.

Improving teacher supply, incentives, training, and morale

Perhaps the most difficult challenge policy makers face in maintaining quality under SFA policies is adequately supplying and remunerating qualified teachers. Given rapid surges in enrollments and the slow process of attracting and training new teachers, it has been almost impossible for SFA countries to reach or maintain student teacher ratios at the FTI recommended levels of 40–45 to 1. An additional challenge in many countries is using government funds to cover the portion of teacher remuneration that used to be covered by school fees or informal assessments, e.g., in the form of “topping up” of teacher salaries, as in the DRC, or paying the full salary of “volunteers” in community schools as in Mali in the recent past. Deploying qualified teachers is especially problematic. Even before introduction of SFA policies, a high proportion of teachers in many countries were unqualified,[45] and the need to recruit scores of new teachers in a hurry has often meant hiring more unqualified teachers or low-cost paraprofessionals.[46] In such cases, the intention is often to overcome teacher training gaps by providing in-service training or professional upgrading, although in practice such efforts are often inadequate.[47] In many parts of the world, a further challenge is dealing with teacher attrition and reduced teacher attendance brought on by the AIDS crisis, as discussed in Box 3.4. Finally, increasing teacher supply has sometimes been hampered by macroeconomic policies (often imposed by IMF agreements) that put ceilings on public sector wage bill increases, thus deterring potential teachers from entering the profession.[48]

Box 3.4. Teacher attrition and absenteeism due to HIV/AIDS

In Zambia, teacher deaths in 1998 were at a rate 70 percent higher than that in its general 15–49 age group. Although this cannot be fully attributed to HIV/AIDS, it well established that teachers in South Africa present a higher incidence of HIV than the general population. The 1998 deaths were equivalent to the loss of about two thirds of the annual output of newly trained teachers from all training institutions combined. In Uganda during 1999, more than 30 percent of teachers were estimated to be living with HIV. In Malawi, it was estimated that in the early 2000s absenteeism averaged 65 days a year for public service employees (including teachers) with full-blown AIDS, and 15 days a year for those who were infected but had not yet developed full symptoms.

Sources (in order): Kelly, 1999, “The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Schooling in Zambia”; Coombe, 2000, *Managing the Impact of HIV/AIDS on the Education Sector*. Pretoria, South Africa: University of Pretoria Centre for the Study of AIDS; and Haacker, 2004, “The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Government Finance and Public Services.”

The need to expand teacher supply, while at the same time increasing the government’s share of payments to existing teachers in many locations, has put many countries in a severe financial bind. This is particularly true where regular teacher salaries are relatively high – in some West African countries, for example, civil service teachers may receive salaries up to 10 times the gross national product per capita – and where there are limits to the funds available for new teacher hires. Efforts to get out of this bind have taken many shapes. For example, Tanzania

[45] In Cambodia, for example, during the four-year period prior the introduction of its school fee abolition program in 2005, the Government sought to increase the proportion of teachers having minimum qualifications from 26% to 51%, but fell short, reaching only 36% by that year (Kingdom of Cambodia, 2005, *Education Strategic Plan for 2006–2010*).

[46] Bender et al, 2007, *Evaluation of the World Bank Assistance to Primary Education in Mali*.

[47] The case of Malawi is described in World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*.

[48] Global Campaign for Education, 2004, “Undervaluing Teachers”; and Sierra Leone, *Education Sector Plan 2007–2015*.

undertook careful teacher recruitment and remuneration planning alongside its education sector and SFA planning. With new HIPC funding and strengthened donor support it was able to hire from an existing pool of 20,000 trained teachers that had been previously unavailable due to a hiring freeze. At the same time it was able to accelerate its in-service training efforts, with the result that the proportion of teachers at the highest qualification level went from 46 percent to 58 percent between 1999 and 2004, the same period it was undertaking school fee abolition.[49]

Many countries, especially in West Africa, took a different policy approach, relying on use of contract teachers or paraprofessionals to reduce the burden of paying teacher salaries (*for the example of Senegal, see Box 3.5*). This approach has shown mixed results. It is clear that it has helped countries recruit new teachers in a hurry and at a low cost. For example, in India's Uttar Pradesh, where there were tens of thousands of unemployed university and secondary school graduates ready to fill teaching vacancies even at low salaries, the state hired 45,000 new "para teachers" in one year.[50] Also, since their contracts have been for work in a specific school, there has been less chance for them to drift to more desirable places; moreover, continued work in the location of hire is, at least in theory, based on performance.[51]

Box 3.5. Senegal has been a pioneer in hiring contract teachers

In the late 1980s Senegal moved to constrain the primary education wage bill by recruiting only assistant primary teachers (two years of training beyond lower secondary versus regular teachers – high school diploma plus two years of training). In 1996 the challenge of EFA pushed Senegal to consider an even more economical approach: recruitment of "volunteer" teachers (at least a high school diploma) from the ranks of the unemployed. The strategy was based on recruiting and training volunteers at the local level, and restricting their posting to the locale of recruitment. This strategy was supported by France and by the World Bank's Second Human Development Project. Over time, the civil service teacher unions, anxious to preserve the status quo and avoid fragmentation of their political leverage, helped volunteers push for contract teacher status, giving them some degree of security and some benefits. By 2003, the country had almost equal proportions of civil service and contract/volunteer teachers, as detailed below.

Remuneration as percentage of GDP per capita

Type of teacher	% of GDP per capita	% of teaching force
Civil service	6.2	30
Civil service assistant	4.9	21
Volunteer	1.9	27
Contract	3.4	22

Source: Adapted from World Bank, 2006b, *Senegal: Quality Education for All Project*.

[49] World Bank, 2005a, *Tanzania: Primary Education Development Program*; and Bentaouet Kattan, 2006, *Implementation of Free Basic Education Policy*.

[50] Government of India, 2005, *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*.

[51] In many locations, performance monitoring does not seem to have been put into practice, such that contract teachers are rarely let go (for Togo example, see Vegas and De Laat 2003).

Nevertheless, many downsides have also been discovered in the implementation of such policies. For example, having a two- or even three-tier system (as described in the box above on Senegal), can make it difficult for a country or its states to develop a coherent quality teaching force, founded on sound personnel policies linked to performance-based career advancement.[52] Quality issues have also surfaced in many places, especially where contract teachers receive little or no training, as with "community teachers" in Mali. A 2003 study in Togo found that the students of regular teachers systematically outperformed those of contract teachers. After controlling for prior achievement, household, school, and classroom characteristics, the educational qualifications of the regular teachers best explained the performance gap.[53] Where local communities are the employer, even with government financing, those who manage the teachers may have little experience in dealing with day-to-day personnel, administrative, and salary issues. Nonetheless, community control can be more effective than centralized management, as demonstrated in a comparison of Mali and the Niger by Bourdon, Frölich and Michaelowa (2007). Whether community controlled or centralized, these systems rarely set out a clear career path for teachers (Senegal is one exception). It is not surprising that these factors sometimes negatively impact teacher morale and performance, in the worst case pushing them to seek a second job or to limiting their in-school teaching hours to allow them more time for after school tutoring.[54]

Failure to monitor teacher morale and attitudes has also had negative consequences. No large corporation would ignore these factors, but teachers have often been regarded as factors of production rather than the largest, most powerful (and often unionized) public sector work force in developing countries. Countries have found the use of contract teachers attractive precisely because they are not "regular" and not, initially at least, unionized (a condition not likely to last long in many countries). Due to demand surges, teachers, on contract or otherwise, have often been expected to show great altruism – tackling ever larger classes, of 100 students or more, and performing administrative and extracurricular duties such as overseeing school sports. In many countries, they are also expected to mentor new teachers, who are increasingly being trained on the job.[55]

Another factor contributing to declining teacher morale is the drop in social status associated with teaching. Community respect for the village teacher has historically been an important motivational factor for becoming a teacher in many countries.[56] Where SFA has led to overcrowding and consequent deterioration in instructional quality, respect for the trained classroom teacher has often declined, compounded by the failings of his or her untrained

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[52] Govinda and Josephine, 2005, "Para Teachers in India."

[53] Vegas and De Laast, 2003, *Do Differences in Teacher Contracts Affect Student Performance?* It should be noted that studies of contract teachers in other locations, e.g., India, have shown just the opposite, namely the relatively strong performance of such teachers (Government of India, 2007, *Sarva Shiksha Abhiya*).

[54] For critical discussions of the use of contract teachers, see: Fyfe, 2007, *The Use of Contract Teachers in Developing Countries*; Bourdon, Frölich, and Michaelowa, 2007, *Teacher Shortages, Teacher Contracts*; Duthilleul, 2005, *Lessons Learnt in the Use of "Contract Teachers"*; and Govinda and Josephine, 2005, "Para Teachers in India."

[55] See the case of Malawi in World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*.

[56] Dove, 1986, Teachers and Teacher Education in Developing Countries.

colleagues.[57] Deep dissatisfaction among teachers can have social and political consequences.[58] For example, flawed primary education has sometimes been a nursery for political opposition.[59] Monitoring teacher morale, as well as parents' attitudes toward teachers, could provide important feedback to school system managers and politicians.[60]

Providing more and better learning materials

Research has demonstrated the central importance of learning materials (mainly textbooks) in positive student learning outcomes.[61] Even without SFA, low-income countries have frequently found it challenging to provide learning materials for students, and those implementing SFA have found it particularly challenging. For example, schools in Uganda experienced severe textbook shortages after introduction of SFA and resultant enrollment surges. In 1997, the first year of SFA, there was only one textbook for every nine students, compared to a pre-SFA ratio of 1 to 3; three years later, it was still high, at 1 to 7.[62] Malawi also experienced a textbook shortage immediately following SFA introduction; although in this case, pre-SFA textbook-to-pupil ratios were restored within three years and improved after that.

SFA clearly increases the sheer number of learning materials needed, and often shifts the purchase of them from parents to the school system. To require an increase in recurrent budget allocations to non-teacher salary items is a challenge, particularly in the many countries where salary expenditures can absorb as much as 90 percent of the education budget (the FTI benchmark for non-teacher salary expenditures is 33 percent).

Another main constraint to adequate provision of learning materials, both before and after SFA, has been the extraordinary inefficiency of conventional approaches, both for acquisition of materials and their distribution. In Mali, textbooks have been purchased by the central government (generally with donor support), requiring the use of tendering (even international competitive bidding), which can take years to complete. Distributing the books has been extremely problematic – cases of entire shipments being lost during international transit have been noted, plus disappearance at other points along the supply chain. As a result, many schools and even entire districts end up receiving no books at all.[63] Another problem is the poor quality of materials (paper, printing, binding), which leads to a short shelf life. Recognizing this, many governments are now beginning to reform textbook provision policies. Kenya is an example of a

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[57] The traditional respect according to teachers had already begun to decline before SFA introduction, but in many locations the deterioration of instructional quality that followed SFA often led to even further decline. Again, see case of Malawi (World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*).

[58] The 2002 Niger Project Appraisal Document recognizes this: "contractual teacher arrangements could lead to unrest and will require sustained political commitment and close consultation with teacher unions." The report sketches out career measures such as a salary increment after successful completion of the initial contract, health insurance, and the chance to compete for senior school positions.

[59] Llana, 2006, "In Mexico, social unrest reflects rising expectations."

[60] Our thanks to Peter Devries of UNICEF for arguing that teachers have to be part of the process with regard to school fee abolition.

[61] Boissiere, 2004, Determinants of Primary Education Outcomes in Developing Countries.

[62] World Bank, 2004c, Uganda: Primary Education and Teacher Development Project.

[63] Bender et al, 2007, Evaluation of the World Bank Assistance to Primary Education in Mali.

country that radically revised its textbook policies in conjunction with its Free Primary Education program, as described in Box 3.6.

Box 3.6. Kenya: school fund for textbooks cornerstone of its Free Primary Education Program

In 2003 when Kenya launched its program of Free Primary Education, planners were aware that one of the biggest student expenses was textbooks. Based on a successful pilot project, the Government instituted a new program of textbook provision in which books were purchased by the schools through a capitation grant for materials provided by the central government. With the establishment of (and external funding support for) this program, schools formed "instructional materials committees" that now purchase government-approved textbooks directly from suppliers, with which they also make shipping and delivery arrangements, thus avoiding costly and unreliable government distribution systems. Competition among publishers and supplies for school textbook orders has brought prices down substantially. In addition, the Ministry of Education worked to rationalize the curriculum by reducing primary school subjects from 10 or 11 to 6, creating additional markets. Whereas, in 1999, pupil-to-textbook ratios were estimated to be about 7 to 1; by 2004 they had dropped to 3 to 1 for lower primary and 2 to 1 for upper. In the Government's Education Sector Support program (2005–2010) the goal is to bring the ratio down even further to one textbook for every student. Freeing families from the need to purchase books has almost certainly contributed to Kenya's substantial increases in primary school enrollment and retention.

Sources: World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*; World Bank, 2003a, *Free Primary Education Support Project*; and Government of Kenya, 2005, *Kenya Education Sector Support Programme, 2005–2010*.

Summary

Maintaining education quality under SFA policies has proved to be paradoxical: loss of revenue and enrollment surges have tended to undermine quality improvement efforts, yet because the policy tends to involve sea changes in the sector, it has also often leveraged more rational and cost-effective provision of classroom space and quality learning materials, in addition to improved teacher supply and support systems. Increasing classroom space to meet the demands of surging enrollments has been a hard sell in an era when strong demands for infrastructure strengthening are coming from many other sectors, but such government reluctance has been overcome in places where SFA has been carefully managed (e.g., phased in) and innovative, cost-effective approaches to school construction and renovation have been adopted (e.g., community-managed construction). Matching teacher supply with burgeoning demands has perhaps been the greatest challenge. An increasingly popular approach to solving that, at least in the short term, has been the use of contract teachers, but given some possible negative consequences of such policies (e.g., decline in teacher morale), such solutions should be used with caution and a longer-term vision. Finally, concerning provision of learning materials, shortfalls – which may have already been common prior to SFA adoption – can occur during rapid expansion, but these have been overcome in the best cases by innovative approaches to publishing and distribution that have resulted in more and better materials for less money. In sum, under the right conditions and with good planning and management, bold SFA policies have encouraged governments to adopt a problem-solving mode that has kept quality improvement alive. (*See, again, Part 2 for examples and the 2009 SFAI operational guide,* Six Steps to Abolishing Primary School Fees, *for some more tested strategies along those lines.*)[64]

3.4. Reaching the most vulnerable groups

As countries approach full enrollment, they face the most intractable of school enrollment challenges, reaching the most marginalized and vulnerable children. These are those from extremely poor families, often living on the margins of society or in remote and linguistically divers areas (such as in Chiapas in Mexico or in the Himalayan foothills of Kashmir), or needed as a contributor to the family income, or living under extremely precarious conditions, e.g., orphans, homeless, or the chronically ill/disabled. For the extremely poor and (often) working child, high opportunity costs of sending a child to school need to be addressed as much as (relatively) high direct costs. For vulnerable children, traditional social networks and safety nets can often not be relied on, for example, in cases where one or both parents succumb to HIV/AIDS and extended family resources are stretched to the limit, or where children become homeless or have health conditions requiring diagnosis and treatments families cannot afford. Comprehensive SFA situation analyses can reveal the existence of such pockets of vulnerability, but addressing them will require actions that go beyond school fee abolition, based on policies that provided targeted support.

Coping with high opportunity costs

Where high opportunity costs are the main constraint to a child's participation, cash transfers (CTs) have often been used to bolster family finances. CTs represent an innovative and increasingly popular channel for the delivery of social services. They provide poor families with cash, compensating parents for the opportunity costs related to child labor and help around the house. Furthermore, with cash transfers conditioned upon children's regular attendance at school and health centers (for vaccinations and regular check ups), families have additional incentives to attend to their child's education. Thus, by addressing the need for short-term income support, CTs promote the longer-term social objective of developing human capital. Ravallion reviewed the trade-offs and policy options in light of historical experience, beginning with Bangladesh's Food for Education and Maharashta State's (India) Employment Guarantee Scheme. He concluded that "in terms of helping those who cannot help themselves, there is no obvious alternative to targeted transfers, barring unacceptable neglect."[65]

Originally pioneered in Latin America as a means of increasing school attendance among the poor, the use of CTs has spread to other parts of the world with some promise. To many, the key to positive education results is use of real sanctions – cuts in payments – if a child's attendance is not up to standard. There is clear evidence of success from programs in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Nicaragua in terms of increasing attendance rates, as well as improving preventive health care and raising household consumption.[66] Additionally, positive evidence is mounting in

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[64] UNICEF, World Bank, ADEA, UNESCO, IIEP, and EFA FTI, 2009, *Six Steps to Abolishing Primary School Fees*.

[65] Ravallion, 2003, *Targeted Transfers in Poor Countries.*

[66] Rawlings, 2004, A New Approach to Social Assistance.

the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region as evaluations are being completed. Turkey's Social Fund has successfully implemented CTs for education and health in the country's 90 administrative regions, using a proxy means testing approach to target families which is based on social and economic "markers" subsequently verified by trained observers. A novel and important feature is that cash transfers are computer based, rather than by an award committee, thus increasing transparency and reducing grievance numbers.[67] CTs are also beginning to be explored in sub-Saharan Africa as a means of reaching highly vulnerable groups (*see "Reaching orphans and other vulnerable children" below*).[68] The logic of using cash transfers for such groups is clear, but CT programs have yet to be subjected to impact evaluation, so their effectiveness in this part of Africa has not been empirically validated.

Reaching orphans and other vulnerable children

The growing numbers of orphans and other vulnerable children in developing countries pose other kinds of challenges. Projections for some 12 African countries suggest that at least 15 percent of all children under age 15 will be orphaned by 2010. In South Africa alone, 1 in 10 belonging to the 10–14 age group is expected to be orphaned by 2015, with a disproportionately negative impact on girls' enrollment.[69] The HIV/AIDS epidemic is clearly the most serious contributor to the growth in the number of orphans. Worldwide, some 15 million children under age 17 have lost one or both parents to AIDS, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa. By 2010, this number is expected to jump to more than 25 million.[70] The negative impact on school participation of becoming an orphan is becoming increasingly clear: for example, a 2005 longitudinal analysis in Kenya by Evans and Miguel found a "substantial and highly statistically significant negative impact of a parent death on primary school participation," with school participation rates declining on average by 5 percentage points after such an event."[71]

Keeping orphans and host family children in school is the first line of defense against the further erosion of social capital. Schools provide a safe environment for children to learn not only the skills required for participation in the work force, but also basic self-protection and survival skills through HIV/AIDS prevention programs.[72] Schools can also compensate directly for low levels of family care through day care centers for preschool children and nutritional and health-care programs. However, experience demonstrates that for the most vulnerable schooling must be complemented by other interventions designed to help keep children in school by eliminating direct costs, compensating host families for the opportunity costs of their labor and providing care and counseling to both orphans and host family members.

As mentioned above, in Africa, cash transfer programs are also being pioneered as a vehicle for providing poor families and caregivers with the resources they need to care for AIDS orphans and keep them in school. Zambia launched a cash transfer scheme in 2003 targeting households headed by the elderly and caring for children who had been orphaned by the death of one or both

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[67] Nicansi, 2003, *Social Risk Mitigation Project*.

[68] Medlin and de Walque, 2008, Potential Applications of Conditional Cash Transfer.

[69] Schierhout, 2005, *Educational Outcomes and Household Illness and Death in the South African Setting*.

[70] UNAIDS and UNICEF, 2002, *Children on the Brink*.

[71] Evans and Miguel, 2005, Orphans and Schooling in Africa.

[72] World Bank, 2002a, Education and HIV and AIDS: A Window of Hope.

parents. Prior to this, in 1998 the South African government began awarding child support to caretakers to offset the cost of childrearing in very poor households.[73] Perhaps the most advanced of such initiatives can be found in Kenya, as described in Box 3.7. One of the strong points of the approach in Kenya has been the use of pilots to test out and identify the best approaches to transferring funds directly to families with orphans and other vulnerable children and/or to caregivers.

Box 3.7. Kenya's pilot CT Project for orphans and other vulnerable children

In Kenya there were approximately 2.4 million orphans and vulnerable children in 2003 in need of care and support; about 1.2 million of them had lost parents due to rising AIDS-related mortality. About one third of these children are less than 5 years old. The number of orphans is projected to grow to 2.5 million by 2010, with 500,000 having lost both parents. While many are cared for by the extended family, this safety net is increasingly frayed as working adults become sick. The National Aids Control Council, with support of the World Bank, undertook the Kenya HIV/AIDS Disaster Response Project (KHADREP) in the early 2000s to provide social protection for children and families affected by HIV/AIDS through small grants to community-based organizations, which carried out actions based on proposals they submitted. An evaluation carried out by the World Bank revealed that in most cases these interventions had little impact and, in addition, involved overhead expenditures of 30–50 percent. In response, and with support of some Members of Parliament, the Ministry of Home Affairs pressed forward with a program to transfer resources directly to families affected by HIV and AIDS. With the help of UNICEF, the World Bank, USAID, and DFID, the Ministry launched the first pilot of a cash transfer program in 2004.

The pilot covered 500 households in three separate locations; one in each of the districts of Garissa, Kwale, and Nairobi. A 2005 review showed that the "pre-pilot" had a positive impact on beneficiary welfare, especially in terms of access to education, health and nutrition. Based on this success,
phase 2 of the cash transfer program was launched in 2006, with the expectation of reaching 10,500 orphans and other vulnerable children in 17 districts. In this "second pilot" two main treatment groups will be supported, one required to meet conditionalities and the other not. The strategic plan is for phased-in expansion of the program with the goal of achieving nationwide coverage, reaching at least 30 percent of the poorest and most vulnerable children. Implementation of the full-scale program is planned to run until 2015. The recent World Bank-supported Total War Against HIV and AIDS Project (2007) will provide additional funding for this scaling up effort.

Source: Pearson and Alviar, 2007**,** *The Evolution of the Government of Kenya Cash Transfer Programme for Vulnerable Children*; and World Bank, 2007c, *Kenya: Total War Against HIV and AIDS Project.*

Botswana, where an estimated 95,000 children had lost one or both parents to AIDS by the end of 2007, is taking a different approach.[74] A national program for orphans was established in April 1999 to respond to the immediate needs of orphaned children, and a comprehensive policy for helping AIDS orphans was established under this program.[75] The Government currently runs a "food basket" scheme, where a basket of food is provided to orphaned households once a month.

[73] Medlin and de Walque, 2008, Potential Applications of Conditional Cash Transfers.
[74] UNAIDS, 2006, Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic.
[75] Ibid.

Orphans are also provided with school uniforms and subsidized school transportation, among other things.[76] By December 2005, 50,557 orphans were registered to receive support from the Government.[77]

Summary

School fee abolition is opening the school door to most of the children who have been denied an education because of their family's inability to pay the price. It is also clear that there are those who cannot afford to go to school even when there are no fees or other direct costs, for example, due to the opportunity costs to families or other vulnerabilities such as extreme poverty, homelessness, or death or disruption due to HIV/AIDS. Among the various approaches to reaching such children, cash transfers (sometimes with conditions, sometimes not) have become increasingly popular. Evaluations of such programs in various middle income countries have shown them to be quite effective. Their use in lower-income countries, including among the most vulnerable, also appears increasingly popular and promising, but there have yet to be good evaluation findings to validate this.

3.5. Reconciling SFA and private primary education

Policy makers endeavoring to remove school fees will need to come to terms with fee-charging private education. This is a complex issue, since in most countries there is a wide variety of private schools, or public-private combinations, responding to a number of different market conditions. In general, parents enroll their children in private schools for two main reasons: (a) as an alternative to the public school chosen for religious reasons and/or for improved quality; and (b) as the only option available in their vicinity. These two options will be discussed below separately.

Private schooling as the family's chosen alternative

Parents often choose to send their children to private schools at a fee even when they live within the district of a free or low-cost public school. Often this is for religious or cultural reasons and/or because the private school is perceived to be of higher quality. Authorities generally allow this to happen, but will not feel an obligation to reduce or subsidize family expenses for it, since public, state-supported schooling is available.[78] The state exercises some control over private education providers through a process of licensing or accreditation, which is expected to assure compliance with quality and safety standards. Allowing some families to opt out of the public school system can be beneficial to society, as long as the places made available are filled by previously unreached children.[79] Also, private schools of high quality can often be held up as examples of relatively good pedagogy and instructional management; one example of this is the

[76] United States Social Security Administration, 2005, *Botswana*.
[77] Leshomo, 2006, "Children's March Helps Launch HIV/AIDS Campaign in Botswana."
[78] In Kenya, after the Free Primary Education program was instituted, authorities were surprised to see private school students being transferred to public schools where they did not have to pay fees (World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*).
[79] Lewin cautions that when elites opt out of the public school system governments could respond by reducing funds, or investment per student, in public schooling (2007, *Limits to Growth of Non-Government Private Schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa*).

BRAC Primary School in Bangladesh, discussed in the third paragraph of the section on "*Private schooling as the only option*," below.

There are frequent policy debates as to whether the government should subsidize such private schools, with the answer often being tied to the extent that the option is truly optional for the family: if yes, the case is weak; if no, the case is stronger. Where free primary education has led to reduced enrollments in private schools, the proprietors of such schools have clamored for some of the capitation grant money but often without success; for example, the case of Ghana described in World Bank and UNICEF (2009). The downside of such a policy is that private schools, needing to keep costs low in order to compete, have (among other things) hired low-cost, under-trained teachers.[80] Also, there are questions about whether parents should be allowed to make financial contributions to their public schools, even when these schools are declared to be fee- and levy-free. Typically, the answer to this question has been that parents should not be prevented from contributing, but no parent, especially in the low-income bracket, should feel obligated to do so.[81]

Private schooling as the only option

As Lewin (2007) observes, when non-public schools fill gaps in public school provision it is mainly in the poorest, most marginalized areas of a country, where parents are the least prepared to pay the required fees.[82] This sets some limits on the extent to which they can contribute to expanded access, since another option is simply not to attend school. From the SFAI point of view, the main question is, How can the State free parents from school fees in locations where there are no state schools? To this there have been many answers.

Mali, Haiti, and the DRC are following models in which the state heavily subsidizes the private provider of education. In Mali, the approach has been for the State to assume the full cost of salaries of community school teachers, and more recently to increase these salary levels.[83] In Haiti, the government strategy (at least that supported by such donors as the World Bank) is to provide capitation grants to the private, often religion-based, schools, which largely supplants fees collected by these schools from parents (*see Box 3.8*). And in the DRC, the strategy is for the State to vastly increase teacher salaries, reducing the need to collect from parents, and to bring a higher percent of teachers onto the state payroll, while at the same time providing a capitation grant to cover schools' operational costs (*see Box 3.8*).[84] At a certain point it would make sense to question, as Lewin (2007) does, whether it would be more practical for governments to simply turn these highly subsidized privately run schools into state schools.

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[80] World Bank, 2004a, Books, Buildings, and Learning Outcomes.

[81] In 4 of 5 countries included in World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*, communities have been allowed to continue making voluntary contributions to the school even after SFA policies were enacted; in most of them there is a stipulation that low-income parents should not be compelled to contribute.

[82] Lewin, 2007, Limits to Growth of Non-Government Private Schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa.

[83] World Bank, 2006a, *Mali: Second Education Sector Investment Program*.

[84] Technically speaking, schools in the DRC are considered public schools – only their operations are contracted to private organizations. Thus, in many ways they function as state-subsidized private schools. The high proportion (about 11%) that are not recognized are virtually the same as unlicensed private or community schools (World Bank, 2007a, *Democratic Republic of Congo*).

Presently, in Haiti and the DRC, the weakness in the state apparatus for service delivery may still not permit this, whereas in Mali it is likely that the Government will eventually convert community schools to municipal schools.[85]

Bangladesh has permitted NGOs to create and run primary schools. The NGO BRAC provides this service for grades 1–5 without charge to the family, covering about 8 percent of the primary school population in 2005. Because of its reliance on donor funding, this strategy is not sustainable in the long run – currently it is acknowledged to be more of an interim solution. However, the NGO has so far not been invited to help the Government formulate a transition plan to public school provision, which would seem to be a reasonable step since the BRAC model has been found to be much more cost-effective than Government's.[86]

These strategies are all for state-recognized private schools. However, in many countries, including the DRC, the poorest school children often only have access to unlicensed or unauthorized non-public schools.[87] These schools also need the attention of government planners if fee-free education is to become a reality for all.

Summary

Questions about how to approach private education inevitably arise in the SFA context and its campaign for cost-free education. This review examines government responses to private education arising from two distinct situations: parental preference for an alternative to public education even where it is available, and the need to send children to private schools because no public schools are available. It finds that governments generally permit parental choice of alternative schools but rarely can justify subsidizing it. Concerning parents' interest in making contributions to their child's public school, SFA policies have generally not prohibited this but require that there be no pressure on low-income parents to contribute. With respect to families' out-of-pocket expenses for private or community schools where no public schools exist, this review examines a number of approaches taken by governments to reduce schooling costs in this situation including state payment of private school teacher salaries, provision of capitation grants, and upgrading "unrecognized" schools, including eventually, where the state apparatus permits, turning them into state schools.

[85] World Bank, 2006a, Mali: Second Education Sector Investment Program.
[86] Chaboux, 2006, Meeting EFA: Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee.
[87] World Bank, 2007a, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Box 3.8. Private provision of primary education in Haiti and the DRC

In **Haiti**, given the breakdown of public services, about 80 percent of all primary level students attend non-public schools, financed by parents, religious associations, NGOs, and other sources. This means that 90 percent of all Haitian primary schools are non-public; 75 percent of these are unlicensed. The extremely limited supply of school places and high demand have driven prices of non-public education to a level that is burdensome for nearly all families, especially the poor. Surveys indicate that the foremost constraint to school access is parents' ability to pay; 43 percent of parents with out-of-school children state this as the primary reason. Despite these disadvantages, the country has determined that there is currently no viable alternative to private schools for reaching the vast majority of school-age children as these schools have comparatively low unit costs and are believed to be more accountable to parents than public schools.

Haiti's new National Strategy for EFA, developed by the Government with the support of local education partners, contains a fully costed 10-year EFA plan, which was endorsed by the FTI in 2007. Among other features, it includes a program to reduce poor families' expenses through subsidizing the cost of non-public schooling. This subsidy is in the form of a capitation grant ($90 per student), which is overseen by school management committees covering tuition fees and the cost of learning materials. Parents will still have to cover relatively modest costs of uniforms, transportation, and, in some cases, school-day meals and snacks. At the same time, efforts will be made to increase the number of schools that are accredited (licensed).

The **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, emerging from decades of conflict and service breakdown, has been unable to maintain a publicly funded education system. Therefore, management of an estimated 72 percent of the country's primary schools is contracted out to faith-based organizations. Given the extremely low proportion of the state budget provided to education – falling from 25 percent in 1980 to 7 percent in the mid-1980s and then rising again (modestly) to 9 percent in 2006 – the Government has either paid teachers very low salaries or no salary at all; about 38 percent of the teaching force is not on the payroll, 60 percent in some districts. Thus, schools have had to raise funds from families ("motivation fees") to either augment or cover entire salaries. In addition, since the State has had no funds for school operations, schools have also charged families a school operations fee. Beyond these main charges there have been lesser fees, including a modest amount for tuition and examination fees. Country-level analyses indicate that these fees represent the main barrier to enrollment and retention; school fees have been found to take up an average 10 percent of total family income, not considering opportunity costs and the purchase of uniforms and supplies.

DRC's newly elected government (2007) has placed state delivery of education as one of its five pillars for national recovery and is working on the development of a sector-wide program in education in which the gradual reduction of private costs for primary education is a main feature. To move this along, the new government (and before that the transitional government) dramatically increased teacher salaries (by 100 percent in 2005), reducing the need for motivation fees, and is rapidly increasing the number of teachers on the payroll, obviating the need for community funding. But as admirable as these efforts are, they do not affect the 60,000 teachers currently working in unauthorized schools. Concerning operational costs, the Government has used HIPC to finance block grants to schools, eliminating the need for the school operations fee in participating schools. It is still not clear to what extent these efforts are sustainable, given the very low share of government budget allocation to education, but support has been forthcoming from various development agencies.

Sources: *Haiti* – World Bank, 2007b, *Haiti: Education for All Project*. ***DRC* –** World Bank, 2007a, *Democratic Republic of Congo: Education Sector Project*; Verhaghe, 2007, "Addressing the Issue of Effective Teacher Payroll Expenditure in the DRC"; and UNICEF, 2007, "Strategies in Support to Primary Education."

3.6. Planning for downstream education demands

Sooner or later, SFA policy makers will need to address downstream issues, notably balanced growth across the education and training sector. As SFA implementation allows most children gain access to the primary cycle, the next challenge will be guaranteeing equitable access to secondary school. Given EFA's momentum, countries are scurrying to find ways to stay ahead of the curve by addressing cost barriers to secondary school access. The World Bank's 2005 user fee survey looked at lower secondary schools.[88] The general conclusion is that little progress has been made in eliminating fees at this level. This issue is especially salient for the poor, since secondary fees are generally much higher than those at the primary level. For example, studies in sub-Saharan Africa have revealed that costs for lower secondary education are typically three times those for primary education. Among the reasons for this are lower pupil-teacher ratios, higher salary costs, and larger numbers of non-teaching support staff.[89] Added to this is the fact that a much higher share of the costs from lower secondary are borne by families (e.g., in Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia, more than half of total costs per student are financed through student fees and levies) and it is not surprising that enrollment in secondary school is heavily skewed toward wealthy households.[90]

Transforming secondary education from a system catering mainly to the elite to one designed for mass consumption poses special instructional and management challenges. Clearly, countries' differing social philosophies, cultural traditions and ability to mobilize resources will lead to a variety of solutions. A recent series of studies on the Secondary Education in Africa presents lessons learned by countries moving from elite to mass systems of secondary education (*see Box 3.9*).

Box 3.9. Moving from elite to mass secondary education systems: lessons from experiences in Africa

- The balanced development of different sub-sectors of the education system is a bottom-up process; broad access to primary education of acceptable quality must be in place for successful development of secondary education.
- How resources are spent is as important as the amount of resources available.
- Government direction and leadership is key to accelerating and sustaining progress and ensuring equity; yet decentralization and local autonomy hold considerable promise, especially in the early stages.
- Public-private partnerships are essential to mobilize the necessary resources, nurture community support and ensure that secondary education responds effectively to the expectations of local communities and national leaders.

Source: World Bank, 2008a, *Expanding Opportunities and Building Competencies for Young People*.

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[88] Bentaouet Kattan, 2006, *Implementation of Free Basic Education Policy*.

[89] Verspoor, 2008, *At the Crossroads*.

[90] Lewin, 2008, *Strategies for Sustainable Financing of Secondary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

Some of the countries which pioneered the abolition of primary school fees are also actively planning for downstream requirements, for example, Kenya. In 2007 the President of Kenya announced the elimination of school fees for secondary education, effective January 2008, to be accompanied by an increase in financial allocations to this sub-sector. Because formal fees only account for roughly 16 percent of private secondary education costs in the country, low-income students are still currently facing a formidable financial barrier.[91] To help overcome this, the Government, with donor support, plans to provide bursaries to disadvantaged youth to cover secondary education costs; the planned program is undergoing a new round of piloting to improve targeting and equity.[92] With this and other supports, the country expects to increase the transition rate from primary to secondary education from 50 percent to 70 percent by decade's end.[93]

The Secondary Education in Africa undertaking mentioned above culminated in the set of policy options listed in Table 3.1, which might be of use to education planners in visualizing scenarios for adequate downstream provision.

Table 3.1. Summary of policy options for secondary education development in Africa

Policy	**Possible response**	**Options for specific actions**
Cost poorly aligned with domestic resources	Reduce per student cost	□ Increase teaching load to 25 hours per week □ Adjust teachers' salaries □ Double shift use of infrastructure □ Boarding only for students from remote areas □ Improve internal efficiency, reduce repetition
	Integrate part or all of junior secondary education with primary education	□ Extend duration of basic education to 8–10 years □ Simplify curriculum □ Upgrade primary teachers to junior secondary education subject matter specialists
Curriculum not relevant to demands of labor market and modernizing society	Align curricula with formally established graduate profiles	□ Provide common core of general subjects in junior secondary education □ Strengthen math and science teaching and introduce information and communication technology □ Avoid occupation-specific vocational training □ Emphasize capacity for further learning and life skills
	Provide broad range of opportunities for further education and training beyond junior secondary	□ Maintain selective access to senior secondary education □ Provide nonformal opportunities for further learning □ Establish technical and vocational education and training systems with a range of programs and providers □ Provide opportunities for students to study advanced mathematics, science, and information and communication technology
Learning achievement is unacceptably low	Protect basic conditions for teaching and learning	□ Ensure primary graduates master primary curriculum content □ Align enrollment growth with resources and policy reforms
	Ensure instructional	□ Ensure adequate supply of textbooks and learning materials

[91] UNESCO, 2007, "Kenya Scraps Tuition Fees in Secondary Schools."

[92] World Bank, 2008b, *Kenya: Additional Financing through the Kenya Education Sector Support Project*.

[93] Ngware et al, 2006, "Improving Access to Secondary Education in Kenya."

	effectiveness	□ Provide opportunities for teacher support and development □ Use information and communication technology to provide teachers with additional subject matter knowledge and assist teachers with lesson preparation □ Prepare head teachers for managerial responsibilities
Access and opportunities to learn are inequitably distributed	Remove obstacles to girls' attendance	□ Provide a safe environment and girl-friendly school policies □ Provide attractive role models □ Reduce distance to school
	Provide opportunities for poor children	□ Ensure equitable access to primary schools of acceptable quality □ Provide means-tested financial support □ Reduce/waive fees for poor children □ Increase density of day school network
Centralized decision making adversely affects resource use and learning outcomes	Increase school level responsibility for service delivery	□ Decentralize resources and decision making authority □ Strengthen local institutions □ Tap readiness of communities to support local school
	Redefine role of national authorities	□ Strengthen central level capacity to set standards, ensure equity, monitor quality, provide core financing, and support schools in difficulty
Encourage multiple delivery mechanisms	Vary service delivery in response to local conditions	□ Create different organizational arrangements □ Allow variations in curriculum choice and delivery methods □ Encourage private training providers
	Exploit potential of information and communication technology, and distance education	□ Establish systems for teacher support and development □ Provide opportunities for secondary education equivalence □ Lifelong learning
Promote Public-Private Partnerships	Establish clear legal Framework	□ Ensure transparency in resource allocation □ Create explicit accountability indicators □ Encourage demand-side financing schemes
	Set up participatory processes	□ Open and participatory procedures for consultation on policy and implementation

Source: World Bank, 2008a, *Expanding Opportunities and Building Competencies for Young People.*

Summary

Pressures on governments to expand coverage and remove private costs of secondary education are increasing as an inevitable consequence of approaching universal primary education, in part brought on by school fee abolition. Although financial constraints are severe, countries are coping in a number of ways. Those devoting a high share of government revenues to education, like Kenya, are working to reduce private costs by eliminating fees and providing bursaries to youth from low-income families. More generally in Africa, the Secondary Education in Africa program has articulated many ways in which governments can make the transition to secondary education more affordable.

Part 4: SFA Implementation Challenges

Given the bold and complex nature of school fee abolition, governments – if they are to be successful – must formulate appropriate and coherent SFA policies and then work to implement them effectively. Effective policy implementation will require that management teams anticipate and successfully address numerous challenges. A review of the SFA literature and country experiences has revealed the following implementation challenges that call for attention.

- Establishing solid leadership and technical support teams.
- Gathering and using information.
- Planning and coordinating interventions.
- Communicating plans and progress.
- Increasing institutional capacity for program implementation.

4.1.Establishing solid leadership and technical support teams

Successful government programs have relied heavily on leadership of high-profile individuals and teams to guide the movement. In turn, these leaders have formed technical support groups to provide expertise over a wide range of specialty areas. Such leadership and technical teams have been supported at the highest political levels and provided the resources needed to carry out their duties. A good example of this is, in Kenya, described in Box 4.1.

Box 4.1. Kenya: SFA leadership sprints to keep up with "free education" policy

Following through with a 2002 election campaign pledge to provide free primary education, Kenya's newly elected government opened the school doors to all free of charge on January 6, 2003 and was overwhelmed by enrollment surges. Four days after the official announcement, the Minister of Education convened an urgent meeting of senior ministry officials, the private sector, civil society organizations, and international agencies to consider how best to deal with the overwhelming response. The meeting's main outcome was appointment of a Free Primary Education Task Force, chaired by Dr. Eddah Gachukia, a prominent educationist. Other task force members included well-known and respected educators and leaders from civil society groups, media, and development agencies. Upon formation, the Task Force quickly went about gathering data and bringing policies and programs into line with the new reality of burgeoning enrollments. To spearhead resource mobilization, the government appointed a technical team of officers from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and the Kenya Institute of Public Policy Research and Analysis, which was tasked to come up with an acceptable funding allocation formula for schools (unit costs). This formula later became the basis for a capitation grant, which ultimately removed the financial cost of schooling from households.

Source: World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*.

4.2. Gathering and using information

The first act of Kenya's Free Primary Education Task Force was to collect information through rapid assessments on schools and households. Although this eventually worked well for Kenya, it would have been more effective if such information had been gathered and weighed well in advance of the launching of the SFA initiative. This is precisely what Tanzania did, gathering data and information and using it for sector-wide planning (including a gradualist approach to school fee abolition) well before launching its SFA program (*see Box 4.2*). Many other countries, including Uganda, Malawi, and Burundi, failed to gather information and plan resources prior to eliminating schools fees and found themselves unable to effectively cope with the ensuing turmoil.[94]

Box 4.2. Tanzania: collection and use of data in SFA programming

In the early years of this decade, Tanzania launched an SFA program in the context of its 2002 Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP). Preparation of PEDP included collection of data on out of school children, which revealed such a backlog of un-enrolled students (3 million) that the country opted to phase in school fee abolition (by grade). Preparation also included an estimation of program financing needs and projection of funding gaps. PEDP itself was created as part of a sector-wide plan (the Education Sector Development Programme, initiated in 1997), which had carried out school mapping exercises in a majority of Tanzania's school districts, providing valuable information on where access and quality issues could be expected to arise. Finally, PEDP itself (Phase 1, 2002 and Phase 2, 2005) included the improvement of education information systems and monitoring and evaluation processes, which have helped to generate reasonable data on progress under the plans.

Sources: Bentaouet Kattan, 2006, *Implementation of Free Basic Education Policy*; and Simwanza Sitta, 2008, "Towards Universal Primary Education."

There is no set list of the data and information needed as a prelude to successful SFA programs, but both positive and negative experiences among countries implementing them suggest that the following are essential:[95]

- Data and projections on the number of out-of-school children by gender, grade, and locality, who can reasonably be expected to enroll in school upon elimination of school fees.
- Estimations of the number of additional classrooms, teachers, and learning materials needed to cover the surge and new enrollment levels.
- Determination of the current location and capacity of facilities, keeping in mind that the bulk of the surge will be in rural areas, and the need to minimize travel time to schools; usually done through mapping.

[94] Avenstrup, 2004, *Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi and Uganda.*

[95] Also see UNICEF et al, 2009, *Six Steps to Abolishing Primary School* Fees, particularly "Step 2".

- Data on the magnitude of existing fees and other direct costs, by geographic area, and what they have been used for; this is used to understand what items will need to be covered and how much they will cost.
- Information on the local capacity for managing and transferring funds down to the school level, including the existence of local banks and the financial management capacity of school-community managers; especially pertinent in cases where replacement of lost fee revenues will involve direct transfer of grants to schools.
- Information on community support for education and the extent to which communities have been involved in decision making and the operations of local schools; this is required where communities will be expected to participate in decisions on the use of grant funding.
- Awareness of the strength and vitality of monitoring and evaluation systems that could be used to track the operation and effects of SFA, including management information systems and learning outcomes assessments.

Experience has shown that not all data collection needs to be undertaken by Ministry of Education officials. Some countries have relied heavily on other sources of data such as household surveys, public expenditure reviews, service delivery surveys, and academic research.[96]

4.3. Planning and coordinating interventions

Without proper planning, SFA initiatives can lead to unanticipated negative consequences, such as overcrowding, declining learning outcomes, and ultimately, a reduction in parent motivation to send children to school – the exact opposite of what the policy is intended to do.[97] Two types of planning to avoid this scenario have been observed: planning within the education sector (intra-sectoral), and planning in a wider, cross-sectoral context (inter-sectoral).

Intra-sectoral planning

The abolition of school fees is not a policy initiative that can be instigated successfully in isolation. Because of its complexity and far-reaching implications, it has often, and most effectively, been planned within the context of overall education program development. In Tanzania, SFA was planned in the context of a Primary Education Development Plan, which itself was embedded in a broader sector-wide education development program (*described in Box 4.2, above*). In doing so, the Government was able to obtain important planning data, set the magnitude and pace of the SFA initiative, identify and mobilize the financial and institutional resources needed to sustain it (sustainable financing), and reconcile/ harmonize related policies. Planning there, as in other complex locations, e.g., Ethiopia[98] and the DRC,[99] was facilitated by

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[96] Although not an SFA country, Niger used a beneficiary assessment to get feedback on the needs and perceptions of low-income parents that was useful in education planning (World Bank and Government of Niger, 2003, *Participatory Poverty Assessment*).

[97] See Malawi case in World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*.

[98] For further discussion of Ethiopia, see World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*.

the use of simulation models, employed to: (a) evaluate the financial impact of different input configurations and levels of financial support, (b) simulate various policy options for SFA phasing, given predicted demand surges, and (c) sort out different options for teacher recruitment and remuneration. Given a sector-wide framework, the Tanzanians complemented their SFA initiative with a scholarship program for highly vulnerable children (the very poor and children orphaned by AIDS) and the expansion of nonformal educational opportunities for overage children.[100]

Since 2002, the Education for All Fast Track Initiative has added an international dimension to educational planning for participating countries. Interested countries – as of mid-2008, there were 33 – can submit their education sector plans to a group of local donor agencies, acting for FTI, which will examine them for coherence, feasibility, and financial soundness. After discussions and adjustments, these plans are generally endorsed by the local agency group, opening up the possibility of additional, coordinated financing from the agencies and from the FTI Catalytic Fund. As an iterative process, FTI endorsement often leads to the strengthening of the primary education component of education sector plans, and within them, strategies for SFA.[101]

Inter-sectoral planning

Given the increased demands for government resources generated by SFA and intense competition among sectors for more state funding, it has been increasingly important that SFA programming be undertaken in the context of inter-sectoral planning. One of the most promising vehicles for this is the development of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. The PRSP process is often linked to the highest levels of government, overseen by the prime minister's office in many cases. It relies on existing institutions – a national commission or equivalent, representative of stakeholders – backed by a technical secretariat, with staff drawn from key ministries such as budget and finance. The national commission has broad financial support from donors, or in some cases is funded directly by them, often through annual Poverty Reduction Support Credits.

Linked mechanisms are also available for the review of sector strategies and development plans and their financing (typically the "priority" PRSP sectors) and an annual cycle of action plan implementation, monitoring and reporting to the public.[102] Most importantly, the national commission has typically established a countrywide consultative process (national and regional workshops – and often focus groups) which make it possible to sound out the public with regard to overall strategy and on specific issues. This consultative process further facilitates knowledge-base development through field inquiries such as household surveys, service delivery surveys, and public expenditure reviews, which provide data needed for analysis and monitoring of

[99] World Bank, 2007a, *Democratic Republic of Congo*.

[100] Bentaouet Kattan, 2006, *Implementation of Free Basic Education Policy*; and Simwanza Sitta, 2008, "Towards Universal Primary Education."

[101] For the FTI sector plan endorsement procedure, see EFA FTI Secretariat, 2006, *Guidelines for Appraisal*.

[102] A common weakness in PRSPs is that they do not pay enough attention to the specific issues, goals and technical support needs of the relevant sectors; for example, see Foster, 1999, "Lessons of Experience from Sectorwide Approaches in Health."

poverty levels and overall quality of life. Finally, discussion of the annual PRSP progress report is perhaps the most important vehicle for raising implementation and financing issues to the level of the international arena, which can be important to advance problem solving and funds procurement. Tanzania is an example of a country that has successfully linked development of an Education Sector Development Programme into the country's PRSP process.[103]

There are other ways to plan and organize across sectors besides the PRSP process. India's District Primary Education Projects of 1993–2003 were distinguished by their numerous joint ventures with non-education-sector service providers. These included women's organizations working to motivate girls; early childhood education providers to help prepare children for primary education and to release school-age girls from child-care responsibilities; NGOs to provide alternative education schemes for overage students; and village organizations to help with school feeding. These connections were not explicitly made for the purpose of school fee abolition, but they often reduced the cost burden to parents and improved primary school participation.[104] In many other cases, the resource mobilization required to finance EFA and permit outreach to extremely vulnerable groups has required ministries of education to partner with other government agencies – such as ministries of finance, health, agriculture, transportation, and social welfare – and "social funds" programs, in addition to civil society institutions.[105]

4.4. Communication between government and beneficiaries

Given the important social messages involved in school fee abolition and its often controversial nature, many governments have found it useful to establish programs of two-way communications. This has meant (a) collecting information on needs and concerns from stakeholders for use in consensus-building and buy-in, and (b) conveying information to the public with the hope of minimizing misunderstanding and controversy. In the early stages of SFA, some governments have found it useful to learn from potential beneficiaries. This has sometimes been done directly – as in Kenya (*see Box 4.3*) – through dialogue on SFA plans with parents, development partners, communities, and school management committees; sometimes indirectly, through use of such instruments as beneficiary assessments, seeking to learn what issues beneficiaries have with the provision of schooling, before and after the implementation of SFA policies.[106] In addition, consensus-building efforts may be necessary to bring around

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[103] Simwanza Sitta, 2008, "Towards Universal Primary Education."

[104] World Bank, 2003b, *A Review of Education Progress and Reform in the District Primary Education Programs*.

[105] For example, Yemen has experienced an explosion of primary school enrollments during the past 10 years, but only a small portion of the investment funds for this came through the Ministry of Education. It was two "social funds" programs and the "public works sector" that provided most of the funds for enrollment expansion, creating new classrooms for about 1.3 million students over a nine-year period, whereas the Ministry of Education created only enough for 50,000 students (see Nielsen, 2006, *From School Access to Learning Outcomes*; and World Bank, 2005b, *Yemen: Basic Education Project*).

Another example is Ethiopia's Alternative Basic Education Program, which is heavily support by national and international civil society organizations (see World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*).

[106] Niger provides an example of a beneficiary assessment used to communicate important messages about education to the government (World Bank and Government of Niger, 2003, *Participatory Poverty Assessment*).

opposition politicians who may not have supported the new policy during a recent election campaign.[107]

Beneficiary consultations have also often provided a "heads-up" on the political climate for policy implementation. For example, they have signaled early opposition to the program, such as that from teachers who may be losing a long-standing source of supplementary income; local administrators who fear that the "liquidity" inherent in locally collected fees may not be matched by grants transferred by the government to school committees;[108] and parents who may not agree with the phasing of implementation because their children will not benefit right away.[109]

Box 4.3. Communication strategies in Uganda, Ghana, and Kenya

Uganda. Just prior to the Government's announcement of its 1997 free primary education program and in response to unofficial reports of disappearing government funds, Uganda conducted a Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) to ascertain how much of allocated grant funds actually reached schools. The results for the period 1991–1995 showed that, on average, a mere 13 percent of the annual capitation grant from the central government was reaching the school level. The balance was used by district officials for purposes other than education (although there was no evidence of increased spending in other sectors or that funds had been diverted for private gain). Following publication of these findings in 1996, the Government of Uganda decided to limit leakages by focusing public attention on the problem. It published information on monthly transfers to schools in the press and on the radio. This move alerted PTAs to verify transfers while at the same time publicly reminding local officials to respect their mandate. A second round of PETS in 2001 found that leakage had been reduced from an average of 78 percent in 1995 to just 18 percent in 2001. Thus, a low-cost communication strategy helped turn the situation around, while strengthening local participation through involvement of the PTA in oversight. Schools attended by mainly poor children benefited most since their PTAs lacked the political leverage vis-à-vis local officials that better off parents could exert.

Ghana. After successfully piloting a school fee abolition scheme, the national government launched a countrywide SFA campaign in 2005 covering all public schools. The campaign was launched at a national press conference early that year, followed by intense public information efforts through radio discussions, announcements on political platforms, and at churches, mosques, and community gatherings. According to a SFA policy analysis, the information campaign – and its consensus-building consequences – was one of the strategies that helped the policy to succeed.

Kenya. An SFA program review for Kenya outlines a two-way communication strategy. On one hand, an open-door policy from the beginning encouraged comments and inputs from various stakeholders, including parents, development partners, communities, and school management committees, contributing to a sense of consensus and program ownership. On the other, the Government organized a rigorous sensitization program among ministry officials at headquarters

[107] World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa* (especially the case on Kenya).

[108] In many countries, locally collected school fees were given to the principal for distribution to teachers as incentives, but since the system was not transparent it was subject to abuse (World Bank, 2004b, *Democratic Republic of Congo Country Status Report on Education*).

[109] In Malawi, phased introduction of Free Primary Education was the preference of government planners, but when the opposition political party won a national election in 1994 it chose to cater to public demand by adopting the "Big Bang" approach (World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*).

and in field offices and undertook a sustained public awareness campaign, both through print and electronic media as well as through public *barazas* (meetings).

Sources: ***Uganda –*** Reinikka and Smith, 2004, *Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys in Education.* ***Ghana and Kenya –*** World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*.

Once an SFA strategy is launched, an ongoing communications strategy can keep stakeholders informed and engaged. Such strategies have often included the following:

- Public information campaigns to assure a clear, realistic policy message reaches the public regarding timing, impact, and implementation risks.
- Establishment of reporting mechanisms (print, radio, television) to keep government and the public regularly informed of progress through audit reports, performance indicators, and impact evaluations of specific interventions.
- Realization of periodic public expenditure and/or service delivery surveys to assess policy implementation – that funds reach schools on time and are spent effectively, and that schools are performing well on such indicators as student and teacher attendance, exam results, and beneficiary assessments – and publishing the results in the media. (Instruments often used for such surveys developed by the World Bank include the Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) and the Quantitative Service Delivery Survey.)
- Reporting to parliament comparing regional and district results, e.g., changes in enrollment ratios, exam and test results, teachers trained, teacher deployment information, budget allocations, budget execution, and evidence of fee abolition.

4.5. Increasing institutional capacity for program implementation

Implementing SFA schemes inevitably requires changes in the way things are done, calling upon new technical and management skills at all levels of government and improving institutional capacity. The most profound changes ushered in by SFA are likely to be at the school and community level. Prior to SFA, most schools were typically passive recipients of standard public resource packages supplemented by contributions from families and the community, collected by the PTA and allocated, behind closed doors, by the principal.[110] Under SFA, most systems eliminated local contributions and created systems of resource transfer to schools, for example, capitation grants. There are many variations on this theme, but in most cases schools and communities have been expected to take a more active role in resource management and allocation, requiring them to open and manage local bank accounts, to develop school improvement plans and budgets, and to account for the use of funds in an open and transparent manner. School heads and staff and school committee members have thus needed to acquire new kinds of technical and social skills (group decision-making) in order to effectively manage such resources. The examples of Kenya and Cambodia are described in Box 4.4.

[110] Non-transparent distribution of community contributions by the principal has been a practice in many countries; see, for example, World Bank, 2004b, *Democratic Republic of Congo Country Status Report*.

Box 4.4. Kenya and Cambodia: capacity building for school and community decision making

Kenya. Under the Free Primary Education initiative, funds are disbursed to schools through two local bank accounts managed by the school management committee (SMC), one covering instructional materials and the other school operations and maintenance. The SMC consists of the head teacher (as secretary) and an elected group of parents. A sub-committee under the SMC, the school materials selection committee, deals specifically with learning materials procurement; it consists of the head teacher and deputy head teacher, a teacher from each grade, the Chair of the SMC, and an elected parent representative. Prior to the release of the first round of funds to schools, the Government engaged in a rigorous capacity building program for SMC members, centered around financial management, procurement procedures, and school-level decision-making. Procedures manuals were also provided. To assure that school funds were appropriately allocated the Government mandated that school bank accounts be audited on an annual basis.

Cambodia. Cambodia's Education Quality Improvement Project, started in 1999, seeks to demonstrate a school-based approach to quality improvement and resource management. The project operates in three provinces, covering 23 percent of the country's total primary school population. Responsibility for change is located at the grassroots level, with local school communities empowered to identify their own needs and make proposals for change and investment. Funds are delivered directly to school clusters by the Ministry of Education. Change management in clusters is supported by district-based animators, who train school personnel and community members on the elements of effective teaching and learning, and help them with school improvement planning. The animators are supported by a network of technical assistance at the district level, which provides pedagogical and organizational support.

Sources: ***Kenya*** – World Bank and UNICEF, 2009, *Abolishing School Fees in Africa*. ***Cambodia*** – World Bank, 2002b, *Education Notes*.

In the many cases where the post-SFA transfer of resources to schools requires new kinds of management and organizational skills at the local/school level, district and provincial level offices have needed strengthening in exercising new support roles such as providing advisory services to school and community managers, undertaking academic supervision, and carrying out/supporting monitoring and evaluation (*see the example of Cambodia Box 4.4*).

At the national level, capacity building of a more strategic nature is often needed. For example, senior planners and administrators have had to learn how to cover this uncharted territory, venturing into the rare space of cross-sector planning and complex policy modeling using computer simulations. For help with this, country officials have often turned to those who have successfully completed such steps for advice and examples of good practice. The facilitation of such exchanges is one of the main purposes of the School Fee Abolition Initiative; specifically, it is SFAI's goal to build a knowledge base and network on school fee abolition that facilitates an exchange of lessons learned and provides guidance and support to countries planning and implementing SFA policies. (This state-of-the-art review is one contribution to the knowledge base.) In addition, countries participating or planning to participate in the EFA Fast Track Initiative are being offered support by SFAI in the form of an assessment of capacity building needs related to implementation of their education sector plans – including SFA-related components, and technical assistance based on identified capacity building requirements.[111]

Summary

As more and more countries adopt school fee abolition policies, some key factors in effective policy and program implementation are becoming apparent. At the outset it has been crucial that governments assemble "blue ribbon" panels to steer the effort, led by persons with acknowledged professional and political stature, supported by solid technical teams, adequate resources, and backing from the highest levels of government. The ability to collect and use relevant and solid information is also critical, as is the capacity to plan and organize, placing SFA in the context of sector-wide planning and cross-sector strategizing, for example, through poverty reduction plans. Proactive communication strategies are also essential, both those that solicit inputs and responses from a wide range of stakeholders and those that communicate program goals and details through public information campaigns, promoting consensus, buy-ins and transparency. Finally, given the fact that SFA calls for new patterns of work and behavior by government officials, school personnel, communities, and families, training and capacity building at all levels is a crucial element of successful implementation.

[111] EFA Fast Track Initiative, 2008, *Guidelines for Capacity Development in the Education Sector*.

Part 5: Summary and Conclusions

5.1.From cost recovery to school fee abolition

The structural adjustment programs of the 1980s, promoted as a viable alternative to tax-based financing of public services, called for cost recovery measures such as the imposition of user fees, which ultimately became too burdensome for the poor. The burden was especially heavy where multiple sectors (health, education, public utilities, agricultural extension, etc.) were promoting cost recovery at the same time. Parents often had to choose between educating their children and basic survival; in the case of multiple children, between educating one child or the other(s) – a decision that usually favored boys. By the late 1980s, there was a large body of evidence that cost recovery had led to a decline in enrollment ratios and stagnation in education development in many developing countries. For political and equity reasons, governments began to move in the other direction, championing the abolition of user fees within vigorous Educational for All movements. This sea change required a few years to take hold, but by the turn of the century fee-free primary education was becoming the preferred policy in many of the poorest countries. In support of this, UNICEF and the World Bank launched the School Fee Abolition Initiative (SFAI) in 2005, which has as its goal to exchange lessons learned and provide guidance and support to countries opting for school fee elimination. The present State of the Art Review is meant to contribute to a fuller understanding of the school fee abolition movement, by discussing recent progress, important policy issues, and current implementation challenges.

5.2. Recent progress

This review assessed progress in adopting school fee abolition policies by examining the experiences of 32 partner countries in the Fast Track Initiative. As a movement dedicated to improved access to quality primary education, FTI has worked since 2002 to bring support and coordinated donor funding to countries presenting solid country plans for accelerating progress toward primary school completion. Given the SFA movement's interest in a similar goal, this review undertook an examination of experiences of the FTI-endorsed countries with school fee abolition, as of 2007. It determined that over half (17) of FTI endorsed countries had adopted SFA policies by 2005, most of them quite recently (between 2001–2005). Of the 17, all but 2 were from the sub-Saharan Africa region. Countries adopting SFA were more likely than the others to be low-income (rather than lower-middle) and off-track in their progress toward the MDG of universal primary school completion.

Official elimination of school fees has not meant that children and their families pay nothing. Families in SFA countries pay for textbooks and uniforms and make financial contributions through PTAs about as much as the average FTI country; however, they pay tuition fees much less often, a benefit probably offset by their having to pay "other fees" more often. In only 4 of the 17 SFA countries was primary schooling pronounced to be truly cost-free. Finally, figures on changing enrollment and student-teacher ratios reveal contrasting consequences among countries adopting SFA. Those countries that have regarded this as a political mandate and have taken the "Big Bang" approach, rushing into it without careful advance planning, have seen huge surges in both enrollment (an indicator of decreased inequity) and student-teacher ratios (an indicator of increasingly poor quality). Other countries which have taken the time to plan carefully, pilot the intervention, and/or phase it in over time have seen growth in enrollments and modest growth – in some cases even improvements – in the student-teacher ratio, indicating a higher likelihood that quality education can be provided.

5.3. Policy issues raised by school fee abolition

Country experiences like those documented among FTI-endorsed countries raise hard questions about what it takes to create successful school fee abolition programs. In fact, adopting SFA policies is a complex undertaking, requiring policy adjustments on multiple fronts and presenting numerous implementation challenges. As outlined above, addressing the issues and challenges in advance through dialogue, consensus building, planning, programming, and piloting is the most prudent way to move forward.

In most SFA countries to date, the most difficult policy issue has been figuring out how to provide sustainable funding to cover revenue losses and enrolment surges brought on through introduction of school fee abolition. A number of SFA-adopting FTI countries have demonstrated a way forward on this: they have packaged the initiative within their EFA and poverty reduction schemes and then presented a case for higher levels of funding for education, from domestic and external sources, in order to close identified resource gaps. Most FTI countries that have targeted higher levels of domestic spending on education – and within the education sector, on basic education – consistent with FTI norms or benchmarks, have seen them increase. International agencies, by themselves or through the FTI Catalytic Fund, have also been supportive of country plans and any SFA elements within them. Moreover, many poor countries, even those not in the Fast Track Initiative, have recently qualified for HIPC relief, which converts debt liabilities into payments for social services such as health and education. For the longer term, countries are seeing the need for policies and mechanisms to improve education spending efficiency and to minimize leakage.

At the local level, where most school fees were collected and spent, there are also many policy issues that have needed to be addressed. The present review sought to demonstrate how a large number of countries are helping schools and districts cope with revenue losses by providing block or capitation grants. In most examples, such grants are administered by local school committees or councils, strengthening local ownership of and accountability for funding decisions, and, with added transparency, providing fewer opportunities for funds to go astray. Such moves have also minimized the loss of community interest in and engagement with the school that might have occurred with the loss of the PTA's role in funds collection.

Another main policy issue is maintaining or improving school quality in the face of changed funding flows and expanded educational access. This is particularly challenging because even before SFA adoption, many school systems were already unable to provide quality services, in part due to resource constraints. The SFA movement has seen school fee abolition as an opportunity to rethink not only how schools are financed but also how services are provided. The main challenge for quality maintenance or improvement is expanding the amount of space, trained teaching force, and learning materials commensurate with growth in student numbers. The present review covers various cost-effective innovations that can allow governments to provide more spaces, teachers, and materials for less. It also mentions the need to pay careful attention to teacher morale and for better supervision or oversight of schools (interrelated factors), tasks that community councils are beginning to take up in some countries.

Other policy questions dealt with in this review include ways in which countries are reaching the most vulnerable groups (is school fee abolition enough to draw them in?); issues and concerns with respect to private primary schools (does SFA apply to them also?); and planning for downstream education demands (can school fee abolition lead to universal primary school completion when families have no hope in their child's advancing to secondary education due to its even higher cost barriers?). For these issues there are no standard answers, but many encouraging innovations are being used in SFA countries.

5.4. Implementation challenges

Solid policy making and coherent planning are necessary, but not sufficient, for SFA success. Experience shows that governments also need to anticipate and deal with numerous implementation challenges. This has meant, for example, the assembly of "blue ribbon" panels or steering groups, led by persons with acknowledged professional and political stature and representing a wide range of stakeholders, to guide the planning and implementation process, accompanied by technical support teams of recognized strength and competence. The best examples are those where such teams receive support from the highest levels of government (president, prime minister, parliament) and the resources they need to carry out their duties.

It also means the government's ability to gather and use reliable information, so that decisions can be based on firm evidence and local realities, for example, about preexisting conditions including actual family expenditures for education, the typical use of fee revenue, current enrollments, and existing school resources, and future scenarios including likely enrollment surge size upon fee removal, additional resources and funds needed to cover lost revenue, and the effects of the surge. Countries lacking good information systems have had to compile new data sets, for example, from sample surveys or household data sets. Once a solid database has been built, planning and programming can be undertaken, both within the education sector and across sectors, the latter involving joint programming with health, social welfare, and local government agencies. Many countries have used computer modeling to aid these processes. Good SFA planning has not been done in isolation but rather made part of sector-wide programming, poverty reduction strategies, and FTI activities.

The importance of two-way communication is often overlooked in implementation of SFA initiatives; communication strategies in which the government (a) solicits responses and inputs from a wide range of stakeholders (teacher unions, NGOs, parents, religious groups, the press, and local government), and (b) makes known its program goals and policy implementation details through public information efforts and campaigns. Governments often use such communication strategies to enhance ownership of or buy-in to their SFA initiatives, recognizing that the SFA policies will inevitably be met with opposition from some parties. Furthermore, such efforts can also be seen as a form of capacity building.

Additional and more explicit capacity building efforts are also needed, given that SFA requires an entirely new approach to school financing and management, one that requires managers and clients (local and central-office) to take on new functions, tasks and responsibilities. The most obvious example of this is at the grassroots level where school personnel and/or community councils need to learn how to handle new grant funds which are replacing user fees and must be allocated according to local needs in an open, transparent and accountable manner.

5.5. Questions for further consideration

This review has briefly described the sociopolitical realities that have, over the past 10 years, led an increasing number of countries to move away from cost-recovery formulas for Education for All toward cost-free solutions. Following this, it described the experiences of a set of countries – those having been endorsed by the Fast Track Initiative – with the removal of cost barriers to education through school fee abolition. Subsequently, it discussed many of the thorny policy issues that countries face in moving toward fee-free education and some typical implementation challenges. In the 8–10 years during which school fee abolition has become more prominent on the policy agenda of developing countries, numerous questions have been raised, and in many cases creative, pioneering solutions have been found. This review concludes with a set of additional questions that need further attention.

1. Why have some low-income countries with particularly low enrollments among poor sectors of their populations not yet adopted school fee abolition policies? Are they pursuing other approaches to cost reduction for the poor or have they simply not yet come to terms with how to remove financial obstacles? Is there any role that SFAI could play in helping such countries sort this out?
2. Many countries where lower secondary education forms part of their "basic education" cycle have only made primary education fee-free. Does it make sense for them to move toward fee-free lower secondary education as well? How can governments stretch their education budgets to make this possible? Are public-private partnerships the answer? What about mitigation strategies, of the kind mentioned in Part 2, targeting relief to the disadvantaged?
3. It is increasingly clear that good programs of early childhood education are a cost-effective means to prepare children, especially those who are severely disadvantaged, for the home-to-school transition. Many countries, however, do not provide government funding for preschool education, leaving it up to the private sector, community groups, or civil society organizations. This often makes it inaccessible to the poor, who are precisely those needing it most. Should school fee abolition and/or public subsidies apply to pre-primary education just as they do to primary? How can governments further stretch their funds to cover this additional education level?
4. This review has been heavily slanted toward sub-Saharan Africa, given that 15 of the 17 FTI-endorsed countries adopting SFA are from that region. The two non-African countries, Cambodia and Georgia, represent other regions but also different circumstances, the first being a post-conflict country reconstructed through UN intervention and the second a country in transition away from communist rule. What can and should be learned about school fee abolition in countries under these circumstances, or, for that matter, in fragile states such as Liberia and Sierra Leone? How are they different from the main body reviewed here? Are there special lessons to be learned?

5. This review has looked only briefly at the internal political and social opposition that the movement to school fee abolition inevitably kindles, for example, from teachers unions, some community groups, national and local government agencies, or political opposition parties. Would it be useful for this to be more fully treated by SFAI and others, so that countries now moving toward SFA can know what to anticipate and how other countries have dealt with such opposition?

6. How can governments be assured that their policies on school fee abolition are being implemented at the local level? As noted in Part 2 of this review, in some countries where school fees have been legally eliminated, schooling fees are still being collected, either directly (illegally) or through proxy mechanisms ("other fees"). The gradual return of fees, often called "fee creep," is a phenomenon that needs to be investigated and addressed, especially now, in light of the global financial crisis. Are there examples of monitoring, evaluation, and feedback systems that have been effective in tracking SFA implementation and correcting noncompliance over time?

7. What can be done when school fee abolition is not enough to reach the most vulnerable, including disabled, children? While this was addressed in the present review, it is still a question with many unanswered features. For example, how effective and sustainable is the use of cash transfers in low-income countries? And, how can the education sector work with the health sector to makes sure that vulnerable children are healthy enough to benefit from school?

8. In most of the cases reviewed herein, SFA policies and programs were launched during the late 1990s to mid 2000s, a period of economic growth at the global and, in most cases, the country level. Sustainable financing for SFA depended heavily on increased budgetary support for education during those years, e.g., for financing capitation grants to schools. The world financial crisis of 2008–2009 is threatening to change that scenario. As one developing country after another falls into recession and education budgets come under new pressures, will governments feel the need to revisit some of their SFA commitments? To what extent will such pressures result in fee creep, the official or unofficial reintroduction of school fees and other private costs? How can governments justify SFA policies under conditions of shrinking budgets and declining resource availability? Can new sources of funds and more efficient ways of using them be found that would allow SFA policies to continue unabated? How is the global recession affecting the plans of countries aspiring to eliminate school fees in the near future?

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Annex: School Fee Policy and Practice in 32 FTI Countries, by MDG Status

***Free of school fees**

Country by MDG status	SFA policy	Change since 2001	Tuition fees	Textbook fees	Uniforms	Financial contributions	Other fees	Observations
Achieved								
Albania (2006)	Unclear	Negative	U	U	U	U	U	Government documents mention basic education through grade 9 to be free and universal, but 2004–2015 sector plans include provisions for a higher share of school financing to be raised by schools. The country's PRSP indicates that there should be subsidies for the poor to keep children from dropping out, but no mention of this has been made in recent sector plan documents.
Guyana (2002)	No	Unclear	Y (after school tuition fees paid directly to teachers)	Y	Y	Y	N	No data for 2001. Government provides "core" textbooks, financed by the World Bank; but other costs to parents are high – after average school tuitions of $10 per month, annual costs for other books $30, uniform $37, plus informal contributions to schools. Government provides school uniforms to needy and school lunches to those in remote areas.
Kenya (2005)	Yes	Unclear	N	N	Y	Y	Y (primary school leaving certificate)	Fees eliminated, but parents buy uniforms and school bags. They also pay for supplies and school maintenance costs not covered by the per capita grant, through informal contributions.
Mongolia (2006) (some data suggest a more appropriate classification to be "on-track")	No	Negative	?	Y	?	?	?	As of 2004–2005, families have been required to purchase textbooks, but vouchers are provided to students from low-income families and cash transfers are awarded to poor families (though currently poorly targeted).
Tajikistan	No	Unclear	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	No data for 2001. Parents support costs in excess of state funding. Government gives cash compensation to poor

Country by MDG status	SFA policy	Change since 2001	Tuition fees	Textbook fees	Uniforms	Financial contributions	Other fees	Observations
(2005)								families with school-age children (though not well-targeted); supplies clothes, school supplies, school feeding to some disadvantaged, plus support for refugees.
On-track								
Benin (2007)	Yes	Positive	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y (includes exam fees; cost of learning assessment, tutoring, school sports, special/periodic events)	Decision to abolish fees for girls made in 1993–1994 not heeded by many schools; similarly Head of State 2001 decision to extend SFA to all not applied because measures weren't taken to compensate for loss of revenue. Renewed decision by Head of State to abolish fees in 2006–2007 accompanied by planning but still shortages in places, e.g., materials and teachers – some unofficial fees collected to compensate. Opportunity costs remain high for some families.
Cambodia* (2006) (FTI appraisal document indicates that unless primary school dropout rates are reduced the country will be off-track for primary school completion)	Yes	Positive	N	N	N	N (?)	N (?)	World Bank 2005 survey indicates no fees at all, but prior to 2005 school-level collections from parents to enhance teacher compensation were widely prevalent. Also, still some evidence of informal contributions and other fees, e.g., for transportation. Household financing of primary education fell from 77% in 1997 to 56% in 2004. The 2006–2010 strategic plan includes eliminating all collections; there are also targeted scholarships for poor families (limited scope) and World Food Programme-supported school feeding program (targeted schools).

Guinea (2002)	Yes	Negative	N	N	N	Y	Y (informal)	No formal fees; informal fees, collected by school, likely the result of shortfalls in budget due to economic recession.
Kyrgyzstan (2006)	No	No/little	Y	Y	N	Y	N	After independence in 1989, financing for primary education shifted to local government and parents: students required to purchase or rent textbooks; community contributions covered most other learning materials and supplements to teacher salaries. Rural communities can contribute relatively little, and quality is falling. Those in rural areas (69%) experience high opportunity costs, in part because many children are needed to work in agriculture.
Madagascar (2005)	Yes	Positive	N	N	Y	N	N	Formally free primary education since 2002. Contract-based grants to schools are managed by school, community, and district. HIPC funds earmarked for teacher salaries and scholarships for poor children. Mitigation of uniform expenses.
Republic of Moldova (2005)	No	Negative	?	Y	?	?	?	Cost recovery for textbooks (rental scheme) added in 1999, with discounts for poor and vulnerable.
Nicaragua (2002)	No	No/little	N	N	Y (informal)	Y	N	Financial contributions set by school councils and vary by school; as of 2001, averaged $28 per child ($19, poor children). Government provides targeted subsidies for very poor.
Viet Nam (2003)	Partial	No/little	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y (informal)	10% of children (those from poor households in remote, mountainous, or ethnic areas) exempt from tuition and other financial contributions.
Off-track								
Cameroon (2006)	Yes	Unclear	N	Y	Y	?	?	School fees eliminated in 1999; free textbooks and other learning materials distributed in priority areas.

Ethiopia (2004)	Yes	Positive	N	N	Y (informal)	N	Y (informal, varies by family income)	Underproduction of textbooks that poor families cannot afford to buy. Communities pay non-civil service teacher salaries and contribute to school construction.
Georgia (2007)	Yes	Positive	N	Y	N	Y	N	Primary education is legally compulsory and free, but parents have been expected to purchase textbooks and have contributed to heating, school maintenance, and teacher salaries; as of 2001 household contributions comprised about 27% of school resources. Government to provide capitation grants directly to schools starting in 2006 with higher per capita rates for remote area schools; also to offer low-cost textbook rental arrangements for poor, mainstreaming, and extra resources for children with disabilities, bilingual education for linguistic minorities.
Ghana (2004)	Yes	Positive	N	N	N	Y (to be eliminated 2005/2006)	N	"Fee-free" education introduced nationwide in 2005–2006 after being piloted in various districts. Communities and PTAs had been allowed to collect levies/fees for school projects.
Lesotho* (2005)	Yes	Positive	N	N	N	N	N	Fees abolished in 2002 on phased-in basis. Fees as of 2005 in grade 7 only, but just 4% of schools still charge. Fees originally represented 14% of primary school spending.
Mali (2006)	No	No/little	Y (illegally collected)					As of 2004, community covered about 17% of primary school expenditures. As of 2005, national plans included provision of free textbooks for all and payment of community school teachers (traditionally paid by community).
Mozambique (2003)	Yes	Positive	N	Y	Y	N	Y (informal)	Parents still pay for uniforms, supplies, and textbooks in the upper grades. Households are allowed to make voluntary cash or in-kind contributions.

Niger (2002)	No	Positive	?	Y	?	Y	?	As of 2003, families and community groups supplied about 11% of funds needed for primary education. Starting around 2004, Government to provide free textbooks and supplies to girls; gradually to supply textbooks free of charge (through free loan schemes) to all; also plans to provide free tutoring to disadvantaged girls.
Rwanda (2006)	Yes	Positive	N	Y	Y	?	Y	School fees officially abolished in 2003, followed by capitation grants of increasing size; retention in school still affected by cost of books, uniforms, and food. Highly vulnerable out of school children offered government subsidized catch-up program. The Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Program for Africa (MAP) finances uniforms and learning materials for orphans.
Senegal* (2006)	No	Positive	N	N	N	N	N	Average household expenditures in education per student fell between 1994/95 and 2002 by 12.5%. By 2005, no fees required (World Bank survey). Since 2005, Government has been increasing pedagogical inputs to schools (textbooks, other learning materials) through block grants.
Yemen (2003)	No	Unclear	Y	Y	Y	N	Y (informal)	No data for 2001.
Seriously off-track								
Burkina Faso (2002)	Yes	Negative	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y (informal)	NGOs and donors help meet costs of uniforms and books.
Djibouti (2006)	No	Unclear	Y	N	Y	Y	N	No data for 2001. Parents pay $5-7 per year in financial contributions and for uniforms. Government provides support for needy (food, health care, free books, and supplies).
Gambia* (2003)	Yes	Positive	N	N	N	N	N	Fees eliminated.
Mauritania (2002)	Yes	Positive	N	Y	N	N	N	Parents contribute to textbook costs.

Inadequate data								
Honduras (2002)	No	Unclear	Y (illegally collected)	Y	Y	Y	N	Data for 2005. Some relief to poor families provided by the Government through family assistance and community education programs.
Liberia (2007) (existing data reveals Liberia to be at least off-track)	Yes	Negative	Y (illegally collected)	Y	Y	Y	?	As a result of social conflict, 20% of schools were destroyed (2003/2004) and most remaining need repair; 25% of schools have no desks; 62% of teachers are unqualified; pupil-textbook ratio 27 to 1. No or little direct transfer of government funds to schools in recent years so user fees are required, but they can only be collected in relatively prosperous areas. A 2001 law requiring free and compulsory education cannot be enforced. After 2005/2006 election conditions have begun to improve. Data is missing or of low quality.
Sierra Leone (2007)	Yes	Positive	N	N (block grants cover textbooks, other learning materials in about half of schools)	N	Y	N	As of 1999, households financed about half of recurrent spending for primary education, but primary education was declared “fee-free” in 2001. More teachers are being provided through new recruitments and learning materials through block grants awarded to about 50% of schools (those serving disadvantaged). Families still cover much of the non-fee expenses of primary education.
Timor-Leste (2005)	No (constitution declares education should be free providing funds are available)	No/little	N	N	N	Y	N	Schools raise funds from parents in varying amounts (average $0.50 per pupil per month) to cover some operational costs, including payments to volunteer teachers (1/4 of the teaching force). Government provides school grants covering fee relief, school materials, minor repairs, maintenance.

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