Strengthening the Implementation of Basic Education in Selected Provinces in the Visayas

STRIVE in support of BESRA

INF824

INDEPENDENT COMPLETION REPORT

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April, 2011

Aid Activity Summary

Aid Activity Name	Strengthening Implementation of Visayas Education (STRIVE)		
AidWorks initiative No.	INF824		
	Stage 1:	**Bridging Phase**	**Stage 2**
Commencement date:	October 2005	April 2007	July 2007
Completion date:	March 2007	June 2007	31 July 2010
Total Australian $	A$ 20.3 million		
Total Philippines $	A$728,000		
Delivery organisation(s)	GRM International		
Implementing Partner(s)	Department of Education		
Country/Region	Philippines/Asia		
Primary Sector	Basic Education		

Acknowledgments

In addition to the team member details outlined below, support was provided by Maria Victoria Necesito from the Department of Education and Carmille S. Ferrer from AusAID.

In addition, the ICR Team wishes to thank AusAID staff at the Philippines Post, the STRIVE Team Leader, technical assistants and administrative staff and DepEd staff in the Regions, Divisions and Schools we visited. The assistance and cooperation which they provided has contributed greatly to the quality of this report.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

1.   STRIVE Stage 2 was designed as a vanguard initiative which aimed to develop and test support systems for School-Based Management (SBM), Human Resources Development (HRD) specifically In-Service Education and Training (INSET) and the equitable provision of Learning Resource Materials (LRM). STRIVE Stage 2 was envisioned to be one of the strategic avenues to support the successful implementation of Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) of DepED.   While implementation has occurred in all three Visayas regions (VI, VII and VIII), outputs have directly informed the policy formulation at the DepED Central Office. It is DepED's intention that the key support systems developed in the Visayas will be replicated in other regions of the country.

Review Findings

2.   **Relevance:**   STRIVE was consistent with GoP policies at design and has remained relevant despite a range of planning, policy and legislative changes during implementation. Similarly, STRIVE's relevance has increased as the emphasis on education in Australian aid objectives has grown. Of greatest significance, however, is the validation of the 'theory of change' embedded in STRIVE which has involved empowering DepEd staff in the pilot Regions and Divisions to manage change, engage in continuous systems improvement and sustain their efforts over time.

3.   **Effectiveness:**   STRIVE has met, and exceeded, its SBM, T&D and LRMD component objectives against all indicators. STRIVE has also effectively embedded the 'Quality Assurance' and 'Access/Equity' themes across all components.

4.   **SBM:**   STRIVE supported the three pilot regions in restructuring and changing the institutional processes underpinning the restructured divisions. DepEd regional staff advises that restructuring has led to significant improvements in efficiency and effectiveness in support of SBM. Not all supervisors at Divisional and District levels were sufficiently skilled to embrace the greater mentoring and training roles expected of them. Further development and support will be required at this level. At Division and School levels staff indicated that performance and attitudes have changed as a result of the new structure, systems and processes. In all regions there are plans to cascade the restructuring down to the non-STRIVE Divisions. All regions need on-going TA/coaching in support of this process.

5.   Pilot Regions and Divisions have been provided with the skills to assist pilot schools to prepare a quality School Improvement Plan, involving external stakeholders, and to implement the plan and monitor performance.   These skills are central to SBM and improved governance. The ICR team observed tangible improvements in schools as a result. Further, there is a demonstrated, on-going commitment at school level to monitor and adjust approved plans and to involve external stakeholders in these processes.

6.   ICR team investigations indicate that pilot Divisions appear to have a functional mechanism to appraise the quality of SIPs, complete with processes, instruments and a committee to do this work. (i.e. Division SIP Appraisal Committee). The regions have issued appropriate policies/directives and set in place a QA mechanism to ensure quality application of SBM practices.   The pilot Divisions monitor the level of SBM Practices of schools. Leadership and support is weakest at the District Supervisor level.   Greater attention needs to be given to this level in follow-on activities in support of SBM.

7.   **SBM Access:**   STRIVE capacitated the pilot Regions and Divisions with management techniques - Support Options for Basic Education (SOBE) - to assist schools in analysing access issues; engaging and mobilizing the school community in support of retrieving the out of school children, youth and adults (OAC/Y/A) and reducing students at risk of dropping out (SARDOs).   This approach has clearly been effective in improving access and has had significant 'flow-on' effects for the students, their families and the school communities.   The use of the SOBE grant fund as an incentive to mobilize local resources has also proved effective.   In the 10 schools where STRIVE supported SOBE during Stage 1 the schools have been able to generate 64c for every peso of grant funds.   Regions/Divisions have strongly supported schools to improve access and wish to spread the approach to non pilot Divisions.

8.   **Enhanced Basic Education Information System (EBEIS):**   STRIVE developed the EBEIS and, responding to DepEd order 94, assisted in the implementation of the system in Regions 6, 7 and 8.   STRIVE focused on building the capacity of the Regional EBEIS Teams to manage system implementation and operationalisation and to train users at all levels on system use and application.   Feedback from all pilot regions was that the system is user-friendly;   encoding of data at the school level promotes a deeper sense of responsibility and accountability among school heads;   Divisions can spend more time in validation, data analysis and reporting;   the system facilitates decision-making based upon comparative data and helps the Division in prioritizing the schools that need TA.   At the regional level, data generated through the EBEIS serves as a basis for the formulation of policies.

9.   DepEd currently proposes to commence the national roll-out of the EBEIS in June 2011.   There are significant concerns that DepEd Central Office does not have the capacity to manage the rollout after STRIVE technical assistance ends in April.   The STRIVE technical advisory team strongly recommends that continued technical support be provided after STRIVE ends, providing support to DepED to both manage the rollout and develop the capacity to continuously maintain the system after the rollout.

10.   **HR-INSET (Training and Development):**   The development of the T&D System in each of the 3 STRIVE regions has provided DepED with a package of innovations which is capable of addressing the training and development needs of teachers nation-wide.   Not surprisingly, the capacity of DepEd staff in the pilot areas to maintain and develop the T&D system varies across Regions.   There is a need for further competency development at the Regional level and TA in resource mobilization and curriculum development.   Clearly the work has demonstrated that a demand driven, decentralized approach to professional development is possible.   In the absence of a strong commitment to monitoring and follow up, however, it is less clear that the institutional culture has changed as a result of this work.   STRIVE has developed a Master Plan (with DepEd and NEAP) for the national roll-out of the T&D System using NEAP as the training provider.   There are serious questions, however, as to whether NEAP has the capacity, at present, to handle such a huge and complex undertaking.

11.   **LRMD:**   In pilot areas, the LRMD Component of STRIVE has effectively supported the development of School Learning Resource Plans, as well as the development of Division/Region Learning Resource Assistance Plans which incorporate support from external stakeholders. The LRMDS portal, the gateway to a broader range of resources, is functioning effectively in all regions.   Registered users currently number over 3,500, with 1500 of those being school based personnel.   In all regions District Supervisors, Education Supervisors, TEIs and LR Managers have been engaged in the operations of the LRMD sub-systems. Poor internet connectivity limits the capacity of isolated schools to take advantage of the portal.

12.   All regions are uploading material, following quality assessment. At the time of the Review Mission, over 800 resources had been uploaded to the portal. In order to maintain the momentum in quality assurance and uploading of LR materials, as well as train a broader range of DepEd staff in use of the portal, the existing LR teams in the 3 Regions need to be supported to at least continue to share their experiences and work together to resolve problems. For this they will need continuing support.

13.   **Project Management:** A number of areas were identified where the structure / functions at DepEd Central Office appeared to have inhibited STRIVE's operational effectiveness.   These include slow issuance of standards and guidelines;   weak coordination and poor communication between organic units at Central Office level and general lack of capacity.   The education Delivery Strategy and designs for any future stand alone activities must reflect the weaknesses identified in the DepEd structures, systems and processes and develop risk mitigation strategies.

14.   **Efficiency:**   STRIVE was implemented using a Managing Contractor embedded within DepEd.   In this respect the modality resembled the approach adopted by the multilateral development banks in providing technical assistance (TA) 'piggybacked' on a loan to support implementation. The modality is, therefore, more correctly termed a 'facilitating contractor' because of the focus on change management and institutional strengthening. An AusAID Efficiency Analysis conducted in 2010 found that STRIVE was the most efficient initiative reviewed both in terms of management and utilisation of Australian government resources and delivery of resources to intended beneficiaries.   In addition to meeting their contractual obligations, the STRIVE team also provided a range of additional technical assistance to DepEd.   STRIVE has consequently resulted in outstanding value for money for AusAID.

15.   **Sustainability:**   STRIVE has implemented a best practice approach to achieving sustainability.   The structures, systems, tools, strategies, guidelines and information management systems have all been developed *with* key stakeholders and are owned and used by them.   In addition, STRIVE has facilitated substantial change in the institutional culture at school, Division and Regional levels.

16.   **Gender Equality:**   The DepEd is reported as having an 'inconsistent' record in mainstreaming gender. This appears to result from limited understanding amongst the current DepEd senior management of gender mainstreaming and of the nature of a gender-aware organization, the lack of a definitive and well-institutionalized GAD policy and a lack of direction in gender budget initiatives for the department. Within this context STRIVE has attempted to support the development of systems which aim to facilitate the move towards achieving gender equity outcomes.   While sex-disaggregated data is collected at many (but not all) levels in the STRIVE pilot Regions, there is little evidence that this data has been analysed and used to design interventions that could improve gender equality and learning outcomes.

17.   **Monitoring & Evaluation:**   The ICR team observed that the introduction of the QA/M&E systems across all components has encouraged DepEd personnel to develop a deep and systemic commitment and engagement in monitoring for the purposes of improved management, accountability and learning. Despite this positive development, however, the quality of the data collected and the analytical capacity of DepEd staff still requires substantial improvement.

18.   **Analysis & Learning:**   The 'theory of change' which underpinned STRIVE, as well as the implementation processes, deserves to be the subject of detailed research.   The STRIVE experience should also be used as the foundation for articulating the over-arching 'theory of change' underpinning AusAID's Education Delivery Strategy in the Philippines.

Conclusions and Recommendations

19.	STRIVE Stage 2 is a rare event in the world of official development assistance. It is a highly relevant initiative which has not only been effective, but has gone well beyond expectations in terms of both outputs and outcomes. Given this, and the application of best practice implementation processes, STRIVE represents outstanding 'value for money' for AusAID and the Australian taxpayer. Nevertheless, the momentum for change which currently exists and the potential for Australia to make a truly significant contribution to the development of the education sector in the Philippines, literally stand on a knife's edge. Australia needs to provide immediate technical assistance to ensure that the systems and professional habits promulgated by STRIVE continue to be supported in the pilot regions. Australia further needs to offer on-going technical assistance to the current Administration to ensure that the national roll-out of a range of systems and approaches is carried out in a manner consistent with DepEd's capacity to manage and support the process. The body of the report contains detailed recommendations as to how this may be achieved.

Evaluation Criteria Ratings

Evaluation Criteria	Rating (1-6)
Relevance	6+
Effectiveness	6
Efficiency	6
Sustainability	5
Gender Equality	3
Monitoring & Evaluation	6
Analysis & Learning	5

Rating scale: 6 = very high quality; 1 = very low quality. Below 4 is less than satisfactory.

Introduction

Activity Background

Objectives, Design and Implementation History

The Strengthening the Implementation of Basic Education in Selected Provinces in the Visayas (STRIVE) initiative was designed to assist the Philippine education sector to improve access to quality basic education in selected provinces in the Visayas. STRIVE Stage 1 was implemented from October 2005 to March 2007 and focused on two main components: Leadership and Management Development and Programs for Out of School Children, Youth and their Families in Bohol and Northern Samar. A Feasibility Study was commissioned by AusAID prior to the completion of Stage 1; the study recommended an expansion to Stage 2.

There was an interim bridging activity between the completion of Stage 1 (April to June 2007) and the start of Stage 2 (July 2007 to June 2010). New guidelines were provided by AusAID for the design of STRIVE Stage 2, indicating that it was to be implemented for 3 years on a rolling plan format. DepED, AusAID, NEDA, other stakeholders and the Managing Contractor agreed on the initial focus for Stage 2 on systems development on a pilot basis (SBM, HRD specifically for INSET and equitable provision of Learning Resource Materials), particularly at the regional level.

In June 2010 STRIVE Stage 2 was extended for a further 9 months in recognition of the significance of the initiative, its achievements and the need to facilitate the completion of the pilot activities. STRIVE Stage 2 consequently ends in April 2011.

The specific purpose of STRIVE Stage 2 was to develop, support and strengthen education management and learning support systems for improved access to quality basic education. STRIVE Stage 2 was envisioned to be one of the strategic avenues to support the successful implementation of Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) of DepED. While implementation has occurred in all three Visayas regions (VI, VII and VIII), outputs have directly informed the policy formulation at the DepED Central Office. It is DepED's intention that the key support systems developed in the Visayas will be replicated in other regions of the country.

Stage 2 focused on the gaps in the effectiveness and quality of the essential education support systems by providing new opportunities and tools for DepED regional and division officials and local stakeholders to understand, appreciate, seize and adopt reform efforts. Specifically, the initiative focused on:

- School Based Management
- Education governance, partnership, and planning in a devolved and decentralised education system
- Human Resources Development (HRD)
- In-Service Education and Training (INSET)
- Equitable provision of Learning Resource Materials (LRM)
- Change management and systems for implementing innovation and reform
- Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Evaluation
- Improving Access and Equity

Stage 2 of STRIVE, hence, developed the enabling environment upon which current and future education reform efforts will be supported, sustained and continually improved. Without the enabling environment created by the required support systems at the regional level, the investment of current and future project resources will be less likely to achieve the desired long-term results of reform efforts and may be more likely to focus simply on the provision of short-term activity inputs.

Evaluation Objectives and Questions

This ICR has been conducted as part of the Education Program Review which included review of the Education Performance Incentives Partnership (EPIP) and Support for Basic Education Reforms (Sphere), as well as STRIVE. The full Terms of Reference (TOR) are attached as Appendix 1.

The TOR for conduct of the STRIVE ICR specifically required evaluation and rating of STRIVE implementation based on the seven OECD DAC + criteria.[1] The TOR also noted that "This assessment will draw from and build on the analysis of the STRIVE IPR in 2009 and the efficiency analysis of the Resources Review Phase 1 in early 2010." Further, the ICR will "capture lessons learned and best practices to guide the design and management of future initiatives".

Discussions during the Entry Briefing for the Review Team identified a discrepancy between the evaluation criteria contained within the TOR and those identified in the current ICR template. It was agreed that the template should override the TOR; as a result the '*Impact*' criterion was removed and the '*Analysis and Learning*' criterion was added.

It was also confirmed that, insofar as the Review Team did not include a Gender Specialist there was no expectation for the Review Team to carry out a full gender analysis in accordance with the Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines and Checklist. Further, a gender assessment of the Education portfolio was conducted in 2010.

Evaluation Scope and Methods

The Evaluation Plan for the Review of AusAID Education Initiatives in the Philippines is attached as Appendix 2. The Evaluation Scope and Methods for this ICR involved a desk review, a field visit to the Visayas and Manila from 15th February – 15th March, 2011, consultations with key stakeholders, analysis, feedback and reporting. The ICR 'Team Itinerary and List of Persons Met' is attached as Appendix 3. Review Instruments were developed to guide the work of the ICR Team. These instruments were the subject of discussion and dialogue with AusAID before being finalised.

Limitations

- Consistent with AusAID's commitments to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action, the design for STRIVE Stage 2 characterizes the initiative as a DepED project; coordinated by EDPITAF; supported by AusAID, with technical assistance from MDI/GRM as the Australian Managing Contractor. Assessment of the performance of STRIVE, therefore, needs to take all of these dimensions into account. In these circumstances, it is difficult, if not impossible, to adequately reflect the contribution of a range of actors by awarding a single rating for performance against specific criteria.

- The STRIVE ICR was conducted in parallel with the EPIP ICR and Part 2 of the Education Program Resources Review. Whilst these are related initiatives, attempts to gather data and conduct consultations across the three initiatives simultaneously placed practical limitations on the extent to which the team were able to address STRIVE-specific questions in sufficient depth. AusAID may wish to reflect on this risk when planning future reviews.

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[1] Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability, Monitoring and Evaluation, Gender and Analysis and Learning.

Evaluation Team

The ICR Team comprised:
- Maurice Robson   Performance, Quality & Evaluation Specialist
- Kaye A. Bysouth   Performance, Quality & Evaluation Specialist
- Max Walsh   Basic Education Evaluation Specialist

Supporting personnel:
- Maria V. Necesito   Education Program Specialist II, Office of Planning
                      Services, DepEd
- Carmille S. Ferrer Senior Program Officer, Performance & Quality, AusAID

The team constituted a productive and complementary mix of professional capabilities, skills and experience in education, performance and quality assessment and public sector knowledge in education in the Philippines context. There were no formal conflicts of interest cited in respect of either the past or present activities of any team member. The DepED and AusAID representatives who provided support are not members of program/implementation teams in their respective agencies.

Evaluation Findings

1. Relevance

The definition of relevance within AusAID has evolved beyond mere consistency with GoA and partner government plans, policies and priorities. The term also refers to the relevance of the aid modality, as well as the specific objectives and strategies of an initiative, in responding to identified development challenges. The Agency is increasingly concerned with the relevance of the 'theory of change' embedded within the design and implementation of an initiative.

- ***Government of the Philippines Plans and Policies***

The design of STRIVE Stage 2 was supportive of the Basic Education strategies stipulated in the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) 2004-2010. Specifically, STRIVE Stage 2 was aligned with the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) which endeavours to capacitate the basic education sector in the attainment of the country's Education for all (EFA) 2015 objectives.

During the life of the initiative a range of planning, policy and legislative changes have occurred. Most notable amongst these are:

- The expressed intention of the new Administration to expand the basic education cycle (known as the K to 12 initiative) including universal Kindergarten and a review of the scope and sequence of the curriculum[2]
- Release of the Draft 2011-2016 Philippines Development Plan (PDP)

The K to 12 initiative is acknowledged by DepEd management as part of BESRA. However, the recent AusAID-World Bank BESRA Review Mission observed the priority and urgency of DepEd achieving integration and alignment of the structures and processes associated with the "K to12" initiative in order to maintain policy and program coherence.[3] Despite the fact that this initiative post-date's STRIVE's design, much of STRIVE's work directly addresses K to 12. Specifically, the LRMD facilitates adjustment to the curriculum and the T&D System is designed to enable teachers to meet emerging needs.

Meanwhile, the latest version of the draft Philippines Development Plan[4] maintains the focus on accelerating the implementation of the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) with greater political will through the five key reform areas: (a) school-based management (SBM); (b) national learning strategies; (c) quality assurance and accountability; (d) complementary interventions (i.e., early childhood education, alternative learning system, etc.); and (e) institutional culture change.

STRIVE's design and the process of implementation has been highly relevant to all of these reform areas; STRIVE has given particular attention to institutional culture change, an area which has not received the degree of attention that it deserves.

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[2] Discussion paper on the enhanced K+12 Basic Education Program; DepEd discussion paper 05 October 2010.
[3] Seventh Joint BESRA Implementation Support Mission Aide Memoire pg 5.
[4] Medium Term Philippines Development Plan 26th February, 2011

- *Government of Australia objectives and strategies*

When the STRIVE initiative was originally designed, economic growth was the central pillar of the Australian development assistance program. Since that time, education has become a flagship sector of Australia's aid program, with support extending from basic education to technical and vocational skills training and improving tertiary level qualifications. Australia's education assistance is focused on promoting equity (providing education for all), improving quality and strengthening education systems in our bilateral partner countries. Australia's education assistance aims to reach the disadvantaged and marginalised, including through the provision of more equitable access to quality education for girls and children with disabilities. In 2010-11 the Agency's investment in education is expected to be over $744 million, or approximately 19 percent of total Official Development Assistance (ODA), an increase of 29 per cent over 2009–10.

STRIVE is, therefore, more relevant to Australian aid objectives at completion than it was at the time of program design.

In the Philippines Country Program education receives the highest level of investment support, representing 45% of ODA. In concert with other donors and International Development Banks, AusAID's Philippines Country Strategy has sought to support strategic, system-wide improvements in policy development and implementation in the Philippines education sector and to scale up successful outputs from pilot initiatives into broad and sustainable outcomes for basic education delivery across the nation. STRIVE was intended to contribute to two indicators in AusAID's Performance Assessment Framework, namely:

- PAF Objective 2.1: "DepEd better able to manage its resources to support schools and teachers"; and
- PAF Objective 2.2: "Improved education opportunities for boys and girls, including Muslim and indigenous groups, in targeted areas to access quality education".

Within this context, it was intended for STRIVE to act as a vanguard, developing and testing support systems in SBM, HRD(INSET) and LRM in support of BESRA. These systems would then be the basis for widespread implementation of reforms through the major loan and donor-funded development investment programs, including the WB-supported NPSBE and the AusAID education sector support program. It was intended that STRIVE would serve as a framework and platform for partnership with other donors and champions of educational support, including the private sector and to guide investments in the reform efforts of DepED. Donors, by utilizing the DepED regional support systems developed under the STRIVE investment should be able to provide additional resources, extending the coverage of DepED reform activities.

Section 2. Effectiveness, below, confirms that STRIVE has fulfilled the intention of being a strategic avenue to support the successful implementation of the BESRA. Unfortunately, the planned linkages between SPHERE, EPIP and STRIVE did not manifest.

Of greatest significance is the validation of the 'theory of change' embedded in STRIVE. This has involved empowering DepEd staff in the pilot Regions and Divisions to manage change, engage in continuous systems improvement and sustain their efforts over time. This approach appears to have been far more relevant, and achievable, in the development context than the use of incentive funds without concomitant institutional strengthening.[5]

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[5] Refer Education Incentive Performance Partnership (EPIP) Independent Completion Report March 2011

- *Aid Modality*

STRIVE was implemented using a Managing Contractor embedded within DepEd. In this respect the modality resembled the approach adopted by the multilateral development banks in providing technical assistance (TA) 'piggybacked' on a loan to support implementation. The modality is, therefore, more correctly termed a 'facilitating contractor' because of the focus on change management and institutional strengthening.

STRIVE's entire modus operandi has involved strengthening the capacity of DepEd to lead and manage development in the education sector in the Philippines. STRIVE has worked from the *inside* to use and develop DepEd systems. At the same time, STRIVE has gathered together and incorporated the best of the work produced under a range of donor initiatives; by retrieving these 'sunk costs' STRIVE has retrospectively addressing the results of aid fragmentation in the education sector in the past.

The STRIVE design was based upon a 3 year, rolling plan format. This approach facilitated flexible implementation and an ability to respond to changing circumstances and to reflect emerging BESRA requirements.

2. Effectiveness

An evaluation of the effectiveness of STRIVE must answer two, interrelated, questions. First, was the initiative effective in its own terms; did it meet its objectives? Second, to what degree did the achievement of these objectives enhance the overall development process?

In respect of the first question, the Review Team found that STRIVE has met, and exceeded, its SBM, T&D and LRMD component objectives against all indicators. STRIVE has also effectively embedded the 'Quality Assurance' and 'Access/Equity' themes across all components. In addition, DepEd regional staff advise that restructuring of the pilot Regions has led to significant improvements in efficiency and effectiveness in support of SBM.

In respect of the second question, the Review Team found that STRIVE has had a significant impact upon the development process in the education sector in the Philippines. The initiative has engaged a range of change agents, at a range of levels, as well as establishing the need for, and the parameters of, change. STRIVE has built systems ownership through active stakeholders' participation in systems development and integration of changes with local management structures. During the final (Extension) phase, STRIVE has supported the pilot Regions and Divisions in a process of Transition Planning which has significantly enhanced the sustainability of the systems developed and the likelihood of continuous improvement in the quality of those systems. Furthermore, the achievements in the pilot Regions has led to significant 'take-up' at DepEd Central Office of initiatives developed with STRIVE support.

The sub-sections which follow examine in detail the degree to which STRIVE met its purpose and component objectives (aid effectiveness). In addition, the sub-sections highlight the change management processes which have been supported by STRIVE and discuss progress and prospects (development effectiveness).

Component 1:	School Based Management (SBM) Support System

This component aimed to develop a functional management support system for continuing school improvement at regional, division and school levels.

Work involved the development of seven sub-systems on areas of participatory mechanisms in education governance; education planning; SBM quality assurance and accountability; SBM M&E; interventions on improving Access and ICT support to education management.

> The change management thrust of this component was to:
>
> - Strengthen governance [in accordance with the requirements of Republic Act No. 9155] and the quality of the delivery of Basic Education; and to
> - Shift the attitude of Divisional and Regional staff from one of supervision to one of technical assistance and support to schools in SBM and
> - Improve awareness of access issues and the practical application of support options to basic education.

- ***Restructuring processes***

At the commencement of STRIVE Stage 2 it was quickly realised that system changes could not occur unless and until the Regions restructured in accordance with the governance framework outlined in Republic Act No. 9155.[6] As a consequence STRIVE assisted all three pilot regions to restructure and create divisions which align with their mandated functions. The restructuring was preceded by substantial capacity building programs to strengthen the capacity of DepEd staff to discharge their new functions. This enabled staff to overcome their apprehensions in relation to the change.

STRIVE supported the three pilot regions in changing the institutional processes underpinning the restructured divisions. Specifically, the Regions have streamlined the bureaucracy by gradually increasing delegated authorities and responsibilities to its divisions. Furthermore, a range of processes were developed / re-engineered, including for policy making; instructional support / technical assistance; resource mobilization; management support to schools; handling of programs and projects downloaded from CO; stakeholder participation; quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation. Processes are gradually evolving to be more: (i) consultative; (ii) participatory; and (iii) based on actual needs.

Regional personnel appreciate new structure: During ICR Mission interviews Regional level personnel reported their appreciation of the new structure. Staff report that the restructure along functional lines has reduced duplication and improved clarity in terms of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. The new structure facilitates easier coordination and implementation of professional development coaching, mentoring, TA, quality assurance and monitoring. It has led to greater cross fertilisation of ideas and approaches as representatives from each of the functional divisions work together in the REXECOM. Moreover, problems can be solved at their own level.

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[6] REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9155   August 11, 2001   AN ACT INSTITUTING A FRAME WORK OF GOVERNANCE FOR BASIC EDUCATION, ESTABLISHING AUTHORITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY, RENAMING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORTS AS THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Division / District staff need support: Not all supervisors at Divisional and District level enthusiastically embraced the changes that demanded a greater mentoring and training role. Some were not sufficiently skilled to do this effectively, and will need focussed development and support from Regional personnel if they are to be effectively included as part of the process. Some Supervisors mentioned a lack of resource funding to travel to schools, especially more remote schools.

The institutional 'culture' has changed: At Division and School levels staff indicated that performance and attitudes have changed. Division staff and Principals noted an improvement in the attitude of teachers. Teachers noted an improvement in the level of support received; they are no longer "afraid" of visits by Supervisors. They not only feel supported by their superiors, but have welcomed the greater involvement (and financial and non-financial contributions) of external stakeholders.

All regions cascading the restructuring down: In all regions there are plans to cascade the restructuring down to the non-STRIVE Divisions. Pilot Divisions are orienting districts that have not had inputs as part of STRIVE. In Region 6 the restructuring at Division level is voluntary; "people have to be willing to make the change rather than order them to do it."[7] The RDs are aware that considerable capacity building will need to take place at the Division and district level in order to encourage the restructuring process. Continuing support is required in this regard.

Regions need on-going TA/coaching: While each of the Regions articulated their needs in different ways, there was consensus around the need to:
- o Manage and support the new functional divisions in their operations
- o Strengthen performance management and evaluation systems
- o Strengthen ICT/technology
- o Complete the staffing of the new structure
- o Support the Divisions and build the capacity of staff and other stakeholders to help them adopt the new Structure.
- o Increase knowledge on the techniques for mobilisation of resources.

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[7] Personal communication: IloIlo Regional Office

- *School Improvement Planning and Implementation:*

Central to school based management and improved governance[8] is the *School Improvement Plan (SIP).* Preparation by schools of the SIP is a mandatory requirement of SBM; however, there is evidence to suggest that this is treated as a matter of compliance in most schools across the nation.

Regions / Divisions / Schools have been capacitated: STRIVE provided pilot Regions and Divisions with the skills to assist pilot schools to prepare a quality SIP, implement the plan and monitor performance. STRIVE promoted a participatory process, led by school heads, which engaged teachers and external stakeholders, notably the Local Government Units (LGU) and the Parent/Teacher Associations (PTA) in the pilot schools. Schools visited by the ICR team demonstrated that both DepEd staff and external stakeholders had a clear understanding of, and commitment to, the SIP process. To quote one school head: "The process is very helpful and meaningful. Now we have a sense of direction; we have people to support us and we have resources."[9] And from a Schools Division Superintendent: "Barangay Captains now talk about 'our School' and have strong commitment to support the school"[10] Another respondent noted that: "Stakeholders have been willing to provide assistance because the school head is very transparent. Hence, the community and the LGU know about the school needs."[11]

Tangible improvements in schools: The resulting improvements in the pilot schools are tangible. Interviews across the three pilot regions with DepEd Division Superintendents and ASDSs, with school heads, teachers, parents, students and LGU officials invariably produced similar comments. All stakeholders had observed the better physical appearance of the schools; improved mind set and attitude of teachers; increased PTA and LGU support for the schools; increased accountability and transparency; and increased capacity of school heads to manage their schools through the SIP. In the schools visited there was a strong perception amongst school heads and teachers of improvements in learning outcomes. This perception was often reinforced by increased enrolments consequent upon the apparent improvements taking place in the school. While the ICR team could not always validate these perceptions, based upon available NAT scores, this does not undermine the integrity, or the potential of this perception to become a self fulfilling prophecy.

Strong commitment to QA / M&E: The on-going commitment at school level to monitoring and adjustment of approved plans, as well as involvement of external stakeholders in these processes, augers well for the continuous improvement of the SIP process and product in the pilot schools.[12] The ICR team directly observed changes recorded in the Annual Implementation Plans (AIP) in response to monitoring. Following the first cycle of the SIP it was noted that there were many undelivered targets due to lack of funding. Nevertheless, it was also noted that a substantial change in institutional culture had occurred.

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[8] Good governance is defined as the dynamic interaction between people, structures, processes and traditions that support the exercise of legitimate authority in provision of sound leadership, direction, oversight, and control of an entity in order to ensure that its purpose is achieved, and that there is proper accounting for the conduct of its affairs, the use of its resources, and the results of its activities.
[9] Personal communication: DSL National High School
[10] Personal communication: Meeting with SDS and ASDS Northern Samar Division 28/2/11
[11] Personal communication: San Jose National High School, Talibon. Bohol
[12] Progress Report on Intermediate Results Dec. 2009 pg. 16 reported that 93% of schools assessed monitored both their AIP-SIP; adjusted these plans and involved stakeholders in the process.

> *Institutional culture change:*
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> Rather than looking to DepEd Central and awaiting both orders and resources, pilot schools are developing the capacity to manage their own affairs and to mobilise resources locally in order to improve their schools. This is particularly important change for remote schools.

As one ICR team member observed after a school visit: "Despite the prevailing poverty in the community, the school was able to create a learning and competitive environment that pushed students to learn well and have aspirations in life."

- ***Region/Division level Education Planning and Implementation:***

Whilst NEAP is responsible for supporting Divisions and Regions in the development of their Division Education Development Plans and Regional Education Development Plans (DEDPs/REDPs) STRIVE provided TA and coaching as needed. This TA was provided within the context of the restructuring of the regions along functional lines and the development of operational systems to support functions.

DepEd staff in Region 8 commented to the ICR team that the STRIVE support for development of the REDP helped them to professionalize: "We have gained so much knowledge on Regional Education Development Planning. There are steps; there is a process. We were taught about using a situational analysis, etc. and how to make a policy based on that. We realised that of the 68 programs and projects downloaded from CO this year only 2 really concerned the regional office."[13] Similarly, in Region 7 comments included the following: "We had to come up with our own way of doing things. We were given the opportunity to look at what is happening to the basic education sectors. It helped us to improve collaboration amongst the functional Divisions. It was also used as the basis for identifying policy areas where our Region will be going over the next 7 years. Now we are preparing a guide to help other regions to prepare their own REDP."[14]

Regional and Divisional staff were also encouraged to engage external stakeholders in the development and implementation of their plans. The ICR team were advised that in Bohol and Tagbilaran the LGUs and congressmen were given copies of the DEDPS. It enabled them to know the schools in their districts and to be aware of specific needs.

Given that the application of professional approaches to the development of the DEDPs/REDPs Regions is relatively recent, the ICR team was not able to assess whether or not these plans were being effectively implemented. Staff in the pilot regions commented that they will need continuing support for the implementation of their REDPs.

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[13] Personal communication: Region 8 Core Team discussions
[14] Personal communication: Region 7 Core Team discussions 1/3/11

- *Division level M&E and support to schools in SBM practice:*

ICR team investigations indicate that pilot Divisions appear to have a functional mechanism to appraise the quality of SIPs, complete with processes, instruments and a committee to do this work. (i.e. Division SIP Appraisal Committee).   In addition, the ICR team observed that the pilot Divisions monitor the level of SBM Practices of schools.   All Divisions have a designated SBM Coordinator.   The divisions claimed to have organised technical assistance to support schools in their practice of SBM.   Finally, the ICR team encountered a number of examples where pilot Divisions had provided follow-up advice and assistance to schools in the practices for liquidating funds (e.g. SBM grant; SOBE grant fund).

The ICR team was not able to rigorously assess changes / improvements in SBM practice in the pilot schools, compared to non-STRIVE schools. A detailed study carried out in late 2009 indicated some movement of schools to the higher end of the scale. The baseline records indicate clustering of scores on the "Standard" Level; approximately 17% of schools had gone beyond the standard. This study also observed that the secondary schools were improving at a faster rate than elementary schools.[15]

Despite these positive developments, the ICR team observed that the leadership and support for SBM and SIP is weakest at the District Supervisor level. Staff working at this level requires motivation, commitment and resources if they are to perform this function effectively. In the view of the ICR team greater attention needs to be given to this level in follow-on activities in support of SBM.

- *Region level support for SBM practice*

The pilot regions have issued policies/directives relevant to a quality application of SBM Practices. The regions have also set in place a quality assurance mechanism to ensure quality application of SBM practices. They are able to monitor the divisions' assistance to schools and appear to have a range of mechanisms (of varying quality) for validating Divisional reports on levels of SBM practice in schools. Region 6 has actively monitored the implementation of the education plans of divisions and organized a task force to monitor SBM grant utilization. Discussions with the REXECOMs in the pilot regions indicate that they provide TA to the divisions in developing the DEDP and support them in monitoring SBM practices and SIP implementation.   The Region 6 REXECOM was most articulate in narrating its practices in provision of TA to the divisions.

Institutional culture change:

The shift in attitude of DepEd staff at Region and Division level from one of critical supervision to one of supportive technical assistance was quite evident during ICR investigations. This change may be wholly attributed to STRIVE's technical assistance, orientation and clarification of monitoring roles and tasks.

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[15] Progress Report on Intermediate Results Dec. 2009 pg. 23

- ***Access:***

STRIVE capacitated the pilot Regions and Divisions with management techniques - Support Options for Basic Education (SOBE) - to assist schools in analysing access issues; engaging and mobilizing the school community in support of retrieving the out of school children, youth and adults (OAC/Y/A) and reducing students at risk of dropping out (SARDOs). These techniques were introduced at the beginning of Stage 1, in the absence of an incentive fund mechanism.

In due course an incentive fund was provided by AusAID and distributed to 46 schools, 10 of which were recipients during Stage 1. The fund acted as leverage for mobilizing local resources to address access issues in the school.

SOBE clearly effective in improving access: During field visits the ICR team had the opportunity to visit a range of SOBE schools. These schools had identified OSC/Y/A and SARDOs, analysed the reasons for drop out or risk of drop out and developed a range of activities/projects to respond to the needs of the students and their families. These included health and nutrition programs, reading, livelihood & training programs, as well as acquisition of improved instructional and learning materials and teacher T&D on techniques for working with frustrated / non-readers.

During the ICR Mission the team encountered numerous examples where the SBM/SOBE approach appeared to have brought about a significant change in access. The ICR team was not able to validate the data provided during the field visits on reduction in the drop-out rate and retrievals of out-of-school children and youth. However, a rigorous and detailed review of the SOBE program conducted in 2010 indicates that of 29 schools where data could be validated there was a downward trend in the drop-out rate from SY2008-09 to 09-10. Seven schools achieved a zero drop-out rate for SY 2009-10.[16]

Significant 'flow-on' effects: A range of other changes were reported during the field visits to SOBE schools. These included decreases in the number of 'frustration level' learners; improved weight amongst malnourished children and greater interest in schooling; job and knowledge/skill opportunities offered to SARDOs/parents; improvements in the local financial support structures for SARDOs (via PTCA, LGU, Teachers Organisations); improved school and community partnerships to address Access issues and improvements in school materials/facilities.

ICR team field visits revealed a strong sense of ownership by the school and its stakeholders of their SOBE initiatives. The term observed extensive involvement of stakeholders in various aspects of implementation, resource mobilisation and management, advocacy and M&E. Particularly, it was noted that internal stakeholders (e.g. school heads and teachers) were multi-tasking to accommodate such responsibilities as treasurer (for the SOBE grant), supply officer, canteen manager, demo-farm manager, etc.) The above observations confirm the findings of the 2010 SOBE Program Review Report.[17]

Regions/Divisions strongly supporting schools to improve access: Pilot Regions/Divisions have established support structures for Access initiatives (Division Access Task Forces /Regional Access Task Forces) and appear to have performed their leadership, management and TA functions effectively.

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[16] SOBE Program Pilot Implementation Report June 2010 pg 28
[17] Ibid pg 17

Now that the regions/divisions have seen the results they appear to be strongly supportive of the SOBE implementation processes; indeed the region and division teams appear to have internalized the approach. For example, in Region 8, DepEd SBM/ACCESS Core Group members noted that they had observed significant changes in the behaviour of school heads in SOBE pilot schools, particularly in Northern Samar. "Principals and teachers have learned that something has to be done and things will be done if they are committed." And further, "We have a greater appreciation on the system of STRIVE on Access. There is a deeper system of conceptualising problems, writing proposals. I have a clearer understanding of the system which helps me a lot in spreading the news to other Divisions."

Incentive fund effective: The SOBE grant fund appears to have been successful in achieving its intent of providing schools with the needed leverage for local resource generation and mobilization. In the 10 schools where STRIVE has supported SOBE during Stage 1 the schools have been able to generate 64c for every peso of grant funds.[18]

There may be a tendency to conclude from the above that without the grant funds, the SOBE approach cannot be replicated. This may not necessarily be the case. According to a DepEd staff in Region 8: "I have seen that that the non-SOBE schools like the approach and have already learned how to make a link with external stakeholders, even if they do not have donor funds."[19] It would appear that the success of SOBE may be less about the money and more about the implementation processes employed and the TA support provided.

> *Institutional culture change:*
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> In the pilot regions and divisions there has been an expansion of awareness beyond the SIP concerns of attaining higher pupil/student learning outcomes, to include an understanding that:
> i. it is important to address Access issues as a mainstream element of SBM; and that
> ii. the SOBE implementation mechanisms are feasible, can strengthen SBM practice in schools and complement the objectives of the alternative learning system.

Many challenges lie ahead if the pilot regions and divisions are to mainstream the SOBE mechanisms in order to respond to schools with great challenges on Access and to strengthen SBM practice. There will be a need to prioritise the agenda of Access in the REDPs/DEDPs; to organise the appropriate implementing structures within the organic functions; to further develop the capacity of relevant staff, particularly the District Supervisors, to provide TA to schools and to provide appropriate resources to cover the operational and administrative requirements.

Any support provided to the Regions/Divisions in these areas will clearly reap significant rewards in terms of improved access and equity for vulnerable students.

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[18] Progress Report on Intermediate Results Dec. 2009 pg. 26
[19] Personal communications: Region 8

- *Management Support System: Enhanced Basic Education Information System (EBEIS)*

The EBEIS is a web-based system that maintains a database of public and private school education statistics. The EBEIS design developed by STRIVE builds on the data and process requirements of the current Excel-based BEIS developed in 2003 by the Office of Planning Services (OPS), DepEd. Evolving data requirements, urgent demand for timely information and the growing volume of data prompted the need to re-engineer the current BEIS and migrate this to a more robust technology platform, maximizing the benefits of web-based technologies.

The EBEIS is envisaged to serve as the integrating mechanism in the DepED's Information Systems Architecture. It aims to aggregate data from the different application systems such as the HRIS, AMS and the SIS to deliver and package information for management's use.

The EBEIS provides for online submission of school education statistics; built-in validation facilities; consolidation and reporting of education statistics at division, region and national levels; automatic generation and publication of performance indicators (EFA, SMEF); access to current and historical achievement test results; online access to multi-year education performance indicators; online SBM assessment consolidation, reporting and analysis of levels of practice; and education management reporting and data analysis tools.

Positive outcomes from STRIVE pilot of EBEIS: DepEd Order 94,s.2010 required full implementation of EBEIS in Regions 6, 7 and 8. STRIVE focused on building the capacity of the Regional EBEIS Team to manage system implementation and operationalisation and to train users at all levels on system use and application. Consequent upon capacity building by STRIVE at the regional level, the regional training team trained the division training teams. The school level training module was then carried out entirely by the divisions themselves.

Experience gained from the region wide implementation of EBEIS in regions 6, 7 and 8 indicates that a region is ready to implement the EBEIS when a team of managers and trainers with EBEIS responsibilities has been established and capacitated. The approach has also demonstrated that the division teams are the most capable planners of implementation of the EBEIS in their own divisions.

The ICR team found that DepEd personnel who participated in the pilot were extremely enthusiastic about the system. In Region VI it was noted that the previous practice of acquiring basic information from schools and divisions had taken an average of six months. Using the EBEIS: "After three weeks of rollout of the system by the divisions, around 85% of their schools were able to encode their basic education information".[20] In Region VIII it was noted that "The EBEIS facility provides a shift from the conventional way of making decisions that rely on the data of the previous year, to a timely decision making process."[21] Feedback from all pilot regions was that the system is user-friendly; encoding of data at the school level promotes a deeper sense of responsibility and accountability among school heads; Divisions can spend more time in validation, data analysis and reporting; the system facilitates decision-making based upon comparative data and helps the Division in prioritizing the schools that need TA. At the regional level, data generated through the EBEIS serves as a basis for the formulation of policies.

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[20] Report on Regional Implementation of the EBEIS Region VI – Western Visayas
[21] Report on EBEIS Regional Implementation Region VIII – Eastern Visayas

The ICR Team observed that staff in STRIVE assisted Regions, Divisions and schools have an enhanced understanding of the importance of reliable, accurate and up-to-date data as a basis for good decision-making and planning. There is a need to build capacity to encode data more efficiently and reliably. Further, personnel are aware that they need their analytical skills upgraded to make best use of the available data.

Significant concerns about the National roll-out of EBEIS: DepEd currently proposes to commence the national roll-out of the EBEIS in June 2011. There are significant concerns that DepEd Central Office does not have the capacity to manage the rollout after STRIVE technical assistance ends in April. The STRIVE technical advisory team strongly recommends that continued technical support be provided after STRIVE ends, providing support to DepED to both manage the rollout and develop the capacity to continuously maintain the system after the rollout.

STRIVE produced a Report on Recommendations for System Roll-Out in November 2010[22] which identified strategies which will need to be adopted to ensure that the capacity to manage and support the nationwide implementation of the EBEIS is present in central DepEd.

AusAID has agreed to provide funding for TA support for EBEIS as a bridge between the end of STRIVE and the commencement of the proposed BEST program. In order to achieve the positive outcomes achieved in the Visayas it is essential for the EBEIS implementation teams at each level (national, regional, division) to apply mentoring and coaching to the level below as part of the capacity building in system use and operation. Adequate, quality TA support will be vital to support this process.

Component 2:	HR-INSET (Training and Development)

This component aimed to develop a Regional HR-INSET (Training and Development) system for quality professional development of education managers, school heads, teachers and non-teaching staff. This included the development of structures, processes, standards and tools for needs assessment, planning and provision of quality professional development.

> The change management thrust of this component was to:
> - Facilitate and enable a demand driven response to the professional development requirements of teachers and educational leaders; and to
> - Decentralize the accountability of professional development to the lowest level of the Department.

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[22] Enhanced Basic Education Information System (EBEIS): Report on Recommendations for System Rollout November 15, 2010

It was intended that STRIVE would work with the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) to strengthen its capacity to coordinate in-service education and training (INSET) programs for teachers at the regional level. In addition, component activities were planned to complement the on-going implementation of the National Competency-Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) introduced through BESRA with support from the SPHERE program. It was also intended that STRIVE would contribute to the development of additional INSET modules that reflected the NCBTS approach and to modify other INSET materials sourced from various other, earlier projects.

Baseline studies carried out in the 3 pilot regions at the commencement of STRIVE revealed that a limited range of quality professional development resources were available. Further, there were no co-ordinating structures at regional and division level to ensure the systematic delivery of quality training programs for teachers. There was very little quality control over the programs delivered for teachers.

The restructuring of the Regions, supported by STRIVE, provided the opportunity to develop T&D, QA and M&E teams which were then supported to create an integrated T&D System. This system involved the:

o Training and Development Needs Assessment (TDNA) sub-system (which establishes a match between trainee's needs and training programs to be conducted);
o e–TSNA Consolidation Tool, developed by STRIVE, and designed to assist in the administration, consolidation, and the analysis of the teacher self-assessment data at the School, District, Division and Region levels
o Professional Development Planning (PDP) sub-system (responsible for producing the Individual Plan for Professional Development (IPPD), the School Plan for Professional Development (SPPD) and the Master Plans for Professional Development (MPPD) for the Region and Division;
o Program Designing and Resource Development (PDRD) sub-system to generate appropriate T&D program designs and resource packages that address the priority needs of the target clientele),
o Program Delivery (PDy) sub-system (which includes the Formal Face-to-Face (F3) and Job-Embedded Learning (JEL) systems.

Each of the above sub-systems feed data into a comprehensive, web-based Training and Development Information System (TDIS), designed and developed by STRIVE, which collects and collates data on training programs, generates a range of reports and provides access to T&D documents and resources such as T&D Operational Manuals, guides and handbooks, templates and tools.[23] DepEd has indicated the intention to integrate the TDIS into the Human Resource Information System (HRIS) currently under development within the department.

Finally, each of the 3 regions were provided with a T & D Centre that served as a hub for small and informal meetings and for housing hard copies of the T&D Operations Manuals and support materials which underpin the T&D System.

The development of the T&D System in each of the 3 STRIVE regions has provided DepED with a package of innovations, including structures, tools, strategies, guidelines and an information management system, which is capable of addressing the training and development needs of teachers nation-wide. STRIVE has developed a Master Plan (with DepEd and NEAP) for the national roll-out of the T&D System using NEAP as the training provider. However, a number of issues will need to be addressed before a roll-out can be effectively implemented. These issues are discussed below.

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[23] See 'Training & Development Information System (TDIS): Draft Standards and Guidelines' Mar. 2011.

- *National Competency Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS)*

ICR Team investigations indicate that, as intended, the NCBTS are being used as a central part of the T & D System in the pilot regions. The T & D Core groups are familiar with the intention behind the crafting of these standards and are conducting down-stream training and advocacy to ensure that they are used correctly. However, the ICR Team found evidence of confusion, even within some members of the T&D groups, over the relationship between the Competency Based Performance Appraisal System for Teachers (CB-PAST) and the NCBTS-TSNA. It would appear that the roll-out of the NCBTS by DepEd Central was focused on compliance rather than professional development; the roll-out was not linked to an M&E system or process or to the process of School Improvement Planning. There has not been any follow-up by the department. This confusion needs to be addressed when the roll-out takes place beyond the STRIVE pilot areas as it has the potential to undermine the usefulness of the NCBTS.

Further, the ICR team found that the NCBTS-TSNA Toolkits (funded by SPHERE) were distributed very late and in some divisions they were not reproduced in adequate quantities for all teachers. In the pilot division of Negros Occidental some initial training was carried out using inferior photo-copies of the TSNA and this detracted from its potential impact as a professional development tool. It is expected that the advent of the e-TSNA will overcome the non-availability of the printed toolkits. Nevertheless, additional advocacy for the purpose of the NCBTS-TSNA is clearly needed.

- *e-TSNA Consolidation Tool*

This tool, developed under STRIVE, has been disseminated to more than 90% of all schools nationally. However, it is only in STRIVE regions that adequate training in its use has been provided. In non-STRIVE regions the use of the Tool has not been clearly explained. Where the e-TSNA from STRIVE has been "borrowed" and rolled-out without training there is little or no understanding of the context within which the e-TSNA might be applied.

Further, a perceived short-coming of the e-TSNA consolidated data is that it is produced in a generalized form that does not allow easy identification of clear, specific needs for areas needing supplementary training. The database used to consolidate the data can be used to reveal specific training needs at school, division and district level, including gender-based analysis. However, most potential users have not been adequately trained in its use as they were outside of the remit of STRIVE.

- *Monitoring and Follow-Up*

STRIVE has included M & E systems in every stage of the T & D System development. In particular, emphasis has been given to training in M & E for the Regional personnel with the objective of improving systems and procedures. There has not been a problem with the collection and collation of data and information, but there is a need for greater attention to be given to the improved *use* of data and how it might inform decision-making on INSET. In particular, there is a need for strong systems to monitor (follow-up) the level of application of the training received by Principals and teachers, and how widely they are able to influence colleagues in new approaches and practices.

Under STRIVE, Principals have been trained in instructional leadership, thus hitting one of the major demands made upon them, that is, to provide professional management to their teachers. However, it is vital that they are held accountable to fulfil their leadership and management roles effectively. Similarly, teachers must be held accountable to engage in the professional development identified in their PD plans in order to improve learning outcomes. On-going support needs to be provided by the Division staff to help Principals and teachers to implement those plans. The T&D System has the potential to hold them accountable.

At this stage, the apparent lack of capacity of M&E personnel at Division level to follow-up and provide support to schools limits the potential of the T&D System. However, as Regions are gaining in confidence and skill to manage and analyse data, they are transferring some of this capacity to Divisional personnel. An additional key factor is that the STRIVE-trained personnel in the 3 regions are making greater contributions to policy development at central level through the introduction of Regional Education Development Plans that are based upon the data coming from schools through the Divisions. They are also monitoring for quality assurance within each region and this is particularly important for the Quality Assurance process for the INSET and Development programs.

- *Implementation arrangements for national 'roll-out'*

NEAP has been designated as the unit responsible for implementing the T&D System at all levels (CO, RO, DO and School), but there are serious questions as to whether it has the capacity, at the present time, to handle such a huge and complex undertaking. Given that STRIVE is finishing its role in April, 2007 and the T&D roll-out has not yet started, it would seem that NEAP will not have the capacity to manage the T&D System without the support of STRIVE personnel. However, it would be detrimental to sustainability of the achievements so far if the trained personnel within the STRIVE pilot regions are expected to provide support. These regions are still in the early stages of implementing the T&D system across their divisions, many of which have not yet been orientated or trained.

STRIVE experience suggests that training might well be coordinated by a unit within each region if given adequate support. The T&D System at the regional level incorporates a structure to allow such co-ordination to occur. However, the opportunity for regions nation-wide to utilize this structure will be dependent upon the approval of the Rationalisation Plan currently being developed by DepEd. [See discussion under section 4. Sustainability, below] If, and when, the Rationalisation Plan is approved TA support will clearly be needed by Regions for training and coaching/mentoring.

The pilot regions have been exploring the role of local providers such as TEIs in the provision of in-service programs. One possibility expressed during field consultations was for TEIs to take a greater role in the provision of INSET through certified and accredited programs within the T&D Structure developed by STRIVE. However, there were questions about the variable quality of many TEI pre-service training programs and the likely quality of INSET programs for teachers. This is an issue to be discussed between DepED and CHED.

- *Institutional culture change*

STRIVE has met, and indeed exceeded, its aid objectives in respect of T&D. Nevertheless, the capacity of DepEd staff in the pilot areas to maintain and develop the T&D system varies across Regions; Region 6 appears to be the strongest. There is a need for further competency development at the Regional level and TA in resource mobilization and curriculum development. It was difficult to determine the degree to which the work under this component has enhanced the overall development process in respect of T&D in the education sector in the Philippines. Clearly the work has demonstrated that a demand driven, decentralized approach to professional development is possible. In the absence of a strong commitment to monitoring and follow up, however, it is less clear that the institutional culture has changed as a result of this work.

Component 3: Learning Resources Materials and Development System (LRMDS)

This component aimed to improve the relevance and variety of learning resources utilized for teaching and learning by enabling efficient access to a wide range of learning resources with the support of many stakeholders. This was achieved by developing systems for assessing, acquiring, adapting, developing, producing and distributing quality learning resource materials for students and instructional support materials for teachers.

The change management thrust of this component was to:

- Decentralize learning resource (LR) mobilisation and planning to the lowest level of the Department; whilst simultaneously

- Facilitating a move into the use of 21^{st}C technologies to broaden the scope of LR materials which schools have access to.

- *Learning Resource planning*

LR planning underway at School/Division/Regional levels: In pilot areas, the Learning Resource Management and Development Component of STRIVE has effectively supported the development of School Learning Resource Plans, as well as the development of Division/Region Learning Resource Assistance Plans which incorporate support from external stakeholders. The ICR team directly observed the attempts of a sample of schools, Divisions and Regions to implement these plans. However, no rigorous analysis was possible of changes/improvements in the number of LR, teacher resource and professional development materials available in schools as a result of these planning exercises.

- *LRMDS Portal*

LRMDS portal functioning effectively in all regions: The LRMDS portal, a web-based gateway to a broader range of resources, is functioning effectively in all regions[24]. Registered users currently number over 3,500, with 1500 of those being school based personnel. Furthermore, in two regions the LR facilities are being linked with 'like' facilities; in Bohol they are linking with library hubs.

In all regions District Supervisors, Education Supervisors, TEIs and LR Managers have been engaged in the operations of the LRMD sub-systems, namely: assessment and evaluation of online resources for cataloguing and redesigning and redevelopment of existing print resources; reproduction of print & offline digital materials; and redevelopment of existing print resources. The Review Team met with a range of stakeholders and was impressed by the capacity building which had clearly occurred in the individuals involved.

Internet connectivity uneven and unreliable: The high schools in the regions have internet connectivity and are able to access the LRMDS portal. However, many isolated schools do not have on-site access to the internet and cannot easily take advantage of the portal. For example, in Northern Samar Division, only 25% of schools have internet access; in many cases teachers use their personal funds to go to internet cafes.[25] The Cluster Lead and Satellite School [CLASS] experiment has demonstrated that it is possible for a lead school to assist remote schools to gain access to improved learning resources. Nevertheless, a number of adjustments will need to be made to the CLASS concept before this approach becomes a truly workable solution.

LR uploading and quality assurance time consuming: All regions are uploading material, following quality assessment. At the time of the Review Mission, over 800 resources had been uploaded to the portal; the resources uploaded have been prioritized according to the identified needs of Divisions and schools. In Region 6, for example, mathematics resources for all years have been uploaded, as well as ALS regional modules, general science, biology, chemistry, English and Filipino. Seventeen Divisions in Region 6 have already been trained in the use of the LRMDS. By contrast, the delays in Region 8 due to late delivery of equipment have been further exacerbated by delays in uploading of materials due to a slow QA process.

To be fair, the QA and uploading processes are time consuming. In April 2010 an Interim Pilot Implementation Report[26] observed the need for regional management to produce a memo/policy cover to prioritise the populating of the portal with LR, TR and PD materials. At the time of the Review Mission it would appear that this policy cover has been issued in Region 6 but not in the other Regions. Substantial commitment will be required from the RDs and Division Superintendents for this work to continue. Furthermore, the system needs to continue to respond directly to the needs of teachers so that they will be eager to use it. For example, teachers lack the materials to teach the new K to 12 curriculum and will be keen to use the LRMDS if these materials are made available through the portal.

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[24] In Region 8 the delayed acquisition of equipment in the Learning Resource Centres delayed introduction of the LRMDS.
[25] Personal communication: Northern Samar Division Implementers
[26] Interim Pilot Implementation Report on The Regional Unified Information System April 2010 pg 16

LR teams need on-going management support: In order to maintain the momentum in quality assurance and uploading of LR materials, as well as train a broader range of DepEd staff in use of the portal, the existing LR teams in the 3 Regions need to be supported to at least continue to share their experiences and work together to resolve problems. Specifically, they need support to hold quarterly meetings; to maintain the system; and to train other DepEd staff in registration, use, quality assurance and uploading of materials to the portal. It is critical that the LR teams that are currently rolling out the LRMDS in their own Regions are not pulled out to Central level to assist in a broader roll-out. If this is to be avoided, however, DepEd Central will need TA support to roll-out the LRMDS.

> *Institutional culture change:*
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> In the pilot regions and divisions there has been a dramatic increase in ICT capacity. Those who have the skills are using them to operate, and strengthen, the systems developed with the support of STRIVE. Those who do not have the skills are extremely keen to acquire them. In Negros Occidental, for example, teachers are monetising accumulated leave credits to buy laptops.

Component 4:	Project Management

The objective of Component 4 was to ensure that STRIVE was managed in an effective, efficient and responsive manner.

AusAID staff advises that MDI/GRM has been effective both in deployment of an appropriate team of long and short term personnel and in the management of operational resources. Monitoring, reporting and acquittals have also been satisfactory. Management has been responsive to changing needs, particularly in respect of work carried out with the BESRA Technical Working Groups (TWG) and in supporting the restructuring of the target Regions.

Although not part of the original design, the work of STRIVE 2 was redirected by AusAID/DepEd to assist the BESRA TWGs (particularly the SBM, QAA, NLS and M&E TWGs) on an 'at call' basis. Although provision was made (under the SPHERE initiative) for provision of TA support to support the TWGs, the failure to tender a contracting firm to coordinate TA support to DepED/CO significantly undermined the effectiveness of this initiative. In many instances STRIVE personnel were called upon to mentor and back-stop the TA working with the TWGs.

Further, the failure of the BESRA Organisational Development specialist to materialize required STRIVE to commit far greater staff time to the restructuring of the regions than was planned.

The IPR team observed that very effective professional relationships have been established between the STRIVE technical advisory team and DepEd. The work of the STRIVE technical advisory team has clearly hastened and facilitated reform, not only in the pilot Regions, but also at the National level as a result of their commitment 'above and beyond the call of duty'. It is important to recognise that 'scope creep' is an inevitable outcome when genuine trust and respect is developed between a TA team and the personnel in a PG department.

- ***Management by Department of Education***

The STRIVE IPR identified a number of areas where the structure / functions at DepEd Central Office appeared to have inhibited STRIVE's operational effectiveness. The ICR investigations indicate that many of these problems, or variations on these problems, have persisted. These include slow issuance of standards and guidelines; weak coordination and poor communication between organic units at Central Office level and general lack of capacity.

Specific examples which have affected STRIVE's operational effectiveness include the poor roll-out of the NCBTS toolkits and training; delays in decision making around the use of the HRIS; the failure to secure equipment for the LRCs in a timely manner; and the delayed (and inadequate) provision of the MOOE to schools.

The Resources Review which has been conducted concurrently with the preparation of this ICR has noted that both the education Delivery Strategy and designs for any future stand alone activities must reflect the weaknesses identified in the DepEd structures, systems and processes and develop risk mitigation strategies. These may include attention to an integrated and holistic approach to institutional strengthening and change management in DepEd and/or the use of a facilitating contractor aid modality in order to increase control over fiduciary risk and operational effectiveness. This advice is consistent with AusAID's recently released guidance on using PG systems.[27]

3. Efficiency:

- ***Value for money***

As indicated above, STRIVE was implemented using a Managing Contractor embedded within DepEd. In this respect the modality resembled the approach adopted by the multilateral development banks in providing technical assistance (TA) 'piggybacked' on a loan to support implementation. The modality is, therefore, more correctly termed a 'facilitating contractor' because of the focus on change management and institutional strengthening.

STRIVE implementation processes highly efficient: AusAID commissioned an Efficiency Analysis of a range of initiatives in the education sector in early 2010[28]. The review found that the STRIVE aid modality was the most efficient initiative both in terms of management and utilisation of Australian government resources and delivery of resources to intended beneficiaries. The report noted that: "Implementation processes are well defined and systematic in STRIVE Manuals of Operation and are time-bound." The report further noted that processes for monitoring of STRIVE disbursements are well defined and include regular reviews with DepEd and preparation of progress reports.[29]

STRIVE QA / M&E systems are able to identify inefficiencies and trigger responses to correct any such inefficiencies. STRIVE could not, however, fully address inefficiencies, for example, reimbursement processes, but has intervened with Division Office accounting staff in an effort to secure improvement in processing times.

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[27] Assessing Using PG Systems Guideline #220
[28] Resources Review: Phase 1 May 2010
[29] Ibid pg 35

Processes transparent and accountable: The transparency and accountability requirements for STRIVE were very clear, and were followed. The STRIVE initiative is notable for the quantity and quality of documentation produced which exceeded the reporting requirements of both AusAID and the partner government. This occurred because STRIVE was not only supporting DepEd staff to develop and document systematic approaches, but also encouraging staff to record the process and progress of their efforts in a systematic way. The intense commitment to QA / M&E across all STRIVE components has ensured that DepEd is now in possession of a package of documentation which describes practical, and tested, approaches to the implementation of BESRA. Indeed, the comprehensive documentation of all aspects of STRIVE operations provides a model for similar initiatives to follow.

Open management approach: The openness of the STRIVE management and approach to engagement with AusAID as donor is also reflected in the openness with which DepEd staff at regional and divisional level engaged with the ICR Review Team. This also reflects an important transfer of attitude and skills to the partner government which needs to be recognised.

It can be concluded that resources provided through STRIVE were used effectively, efficiently, and in a transparent and accountable manner. These are the three criteria which underpin AusAID's concept of 'value for money'[30]

Substantial additional services provided by STRIVE: The IPR [Sept. 2009] noted that, in addition to meeting their contractual obligations, the STRIVE team provided a range of additional technical assistance to DepEd, particularly the Technical Working Groups. This trend has continued during the period under review. DepEd management has continued to call upon the STRIVE team for assistance; these demands increased substantially during the 9 month extension period. Major inputs and support has been provided to develop:

- the DepEd Rationalisation Plan which has drawn heavily upon the experience of restructuring of Regions 6, 7 and 8.
- a system for aligning SIPs, DEDPs and REDPs into a National Education Development Plan.
- preparedness for the national roll-out of the Enhanced Basic Education Information System piloted by STRIVE.
- a competency based selection system to screen managers at the Regional level, based upon profiling carried out by STRIVE to support the regional restructuring.

As a result of the above, investment in STRIVE has resulted in outstanding value for money for AusAID.

- *Management of Risk*

The Contractor adequately maintained and updated the Risk Management Matrix throughout the implementation of STRIVE Stage 2. It is worth noting that the frequent changes of senior management of DepEd (at CO and Regional levels) *could* have represented a high risk to the initiative. STRIVE has experienced three changes of administration during the period of implementation. There have been three different Secretaries in as many years. All the Regional Directors in the pilot Regions retired during the implementation period.

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[30] 'AusAID's Procurement Policy Framework: a Guide for Business' November 2008

Despite the frequent changes, successive administrations have looked to STRIVE for advice and support. This has occurred because:

- o STRIVE has had an impeccable approach to documentation of processes and outputs.
- o The STRIVE team has been prepared to brief and re-brief incoming Secretaries and to advocate on behalf of the program.
- o STRIVE has trained Assistant Regional Directors, as well as Directors, to ensure institutional memory at the Regional level.

- *AusAID Management Systems*

The IPR noted that "the complexity and timing of the contracting and approval processes at HQ in Canberra may be out of step with the devolution of responsibilities to the Post".[31]   The problems identified in 2009 appear to have persisted in the handling of the extension of STRIVE.

The IPR unanimously recommended a 22 month extension of STRIVE to facilitate bedding down of the synchronized and integrated set of systems for managing schools over one full school year. Ultimately, the delegate was not able to agree to this extension because of the provisions of the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines (CPG) which prohibit extension of a contract with the same Managing Contractor without going back to tender.

Although a nine month extension was able to be granted within the CPG, the foreshortened extension period had significant 'downstream' effects which are discussed in Section 4. Sustainability, below.

Of greater significance for the current discussion, however, is the length of time it took to make a decision on the extension of STRIVE and for the contract to be finalised. With the non-approval of the 22 month extension, the Program was required to develop an alternative approach and to re-submit the proposed revised approach for the delegate's consideration in Canberra. STRIVE Stage 2 was due for completion in July 2010. AusAID finally agreed to a 9 month extension in June 2010. During the previous three months the STRIVE advisory team had to function under a three options scenario: Option A – no extension; Option B – 22 month extension; Option C – a shorter extension of indeterminate length.

At this point a quote from the IPR seems apt: "Where contracting and approval processes are not able to facilitate the smooth and uninterrupted implementation of agreed forms of development assistance, it may be appropriate for AusAID to consider reviewing the quality of these processes". Considerable discussion is being held across the Agency on the tension which often exists between development effectiveness and meeting exceptionally high standards of accountability.

The contract for the nine month extension was broken down into a 2 month extension (August - September 2010) which was signed on the 17th August and a 7 month extension (October 2010 - April 2011) which was not signed until just before Christmas. The delays appear to have resulted from a delay in NEDA approval of the extension; a change in the Australian government which meant that caretaker provisions limited contracting activities and the late clearance in Canberra of contract amendments.

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[31] STRIVE Final IPR Op.cit pg. 14

4. Sustainability:

- *Achievements*

AusAID defines sustainability as "the extent to which the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn".[32]

As indicated earlier, the modus operandi of all aspects of the STRIVE initiative has been to empower DepEd staff to manage change and sustain the systems and approaches they have developed. ICR team investigations confirm that STRIVE has implemented a best practice approach to achieving sustainability.

The structures, systems, tools, strategies, guidelines and information management systems left behind by STRIVE have been adequately discussed under Section 2. Effectiveness, above, and will not be repeated here. However, the institutional culture changes, and the changes in people, deserve to be repeated insofar as these are the changes that will persist. These include:

- o improved capacity and willingness amongst school communities to manage their own affairs and to mobilise resources locally to improve their schools
- o a shift in attitude of DepEd staff at Region and Division level from one of critical supervision to one of supportive technical assistance
- o increased recognition in pilot regions and divisions of the importance of addressing Access issues as a mainstream element of SBM and knowledge of feasible approaches for doing so
- o dramatic increases in ICT capacity and motivation to acquire ICT skills

The comments of DepEd staff are particularly telling. To quote staff interviewed in Region 8: "STRIVE has made us to think. It has encouraged you to get what is in your mind to come out. You have to crack your head."[33] And from the Core teams in Cebu the following comments: "The difference between STRIVE and other projects is that the systems are *there;* they are *ours;* we are using them; we cannot lose that. Also, our relationships have changed because of the restructuring. We do not belong to different divisions now; we work as a team. We are overwhelmed and proud to have been part of the preparation of all these things."[34]

Further, based upon lessons learned from previous initiatives, AusAID directed the Managing Contractor to discuss with DepEd the preparation of Transition Plans related to the maintenance and development of systems and approaches introduced with STRIVE support. These have now been prepared by the managers of the STRIVE Regions and Field Divisions, as well as the Central Office.

ICR investigations indicate that the pilot regions have budgeted in their REDPs for the cascading work required to ensure that all Divisions, districts and schools receive the necessary training to implement the systems developed with STRIVE support.

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[32] AusAID is guided in this definition of sustainability by the OECD Development Assistance Committee Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance.
[33] Personal Communication: Discussions with Region 8 functional divisions.
[34] Personal communication: Cebu Core Teams 1/3/11

- *Challenges*

Despite the extraordinary achievements of STRIVE in facilitating reform, however, the reforms remain fragile. In the last year the pilot Regions have restructured; personnel have taken on new roles and responsibilities, new systems have been adopted at Region, Division and School levels and efforts are being made to roll out these systems to non-STRIVE Divisions and Schools. Whilst capacity building and re-orientation has been continuous STRIVE personnel nevertheless point out that "We have just planted the seed. The embedding of professional habits required to institutionalise the systems is yet to come.

Whilst there is significant momentum for change, a range of actions need to take place to sustain this momentum, as follows:

  o Finalisation and approval of the DepEd CO Rationalisation Plan is central to the sustainability of the restructuring in the pilot Regions, as well as the roll-out of the new regional structure across the nation. Until this occurs, the pilot regions must still deal with a CO which does not recognise the new structures.
  o There is a need for on-going leadership and management training / coaching at all levels in DepEd, including training in instructional supervision for school Principals.
  o Further competency development is required at the Regional level and resource mobilisation remains an issue.
  o There is still a lack of trained M & E personnel in sufficient numbers to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the T&D System particularly at divisional and school level.
  o The Training and Development Information System has only recently been piloted, due to delays in DepEd decision making on HRIS. The maintenance and further development of this system is, therefore, at risk.
  o In pilot areas, QA and uploading processes which support the further development of the Learning Resource Management and Development System are time consuming and substantial commitment will be required from the RDs and Division Superintendents for this work to continue.
  o DepEd personnel clearly need on-going coaching in data analysis and the use of the results of analysis to inform planning and decision making.
  o The Enhanced Basic Education Information System requires further programming, debugging and technical advice to users will be required to support the roll-out in June 2011
  o Finally, with the current K to 12 policy thrust, there is a danger that the systems development which has occurred in the pilot regions will be pushed to one side in order to develop new classrooms, teachers, etc. to cater for the influx of kindergarten students.

- *AusAID's role in promoting sustainability*

As mentioned earlier, in order to satisfy Commonwealth Procurement Guideline provisions, AusAID granted a nine month extension, rather than the 22 month which was recommended. This drastically shortened the time available to not only embed the systems but also to encourage the professional habits which will ensure that the systems may be sustained. This decision had significant knock-on effects – some positive, some negative - as follows:

- o The message from the STRIVE team during the extension phase was "You are implementers" hence DepEd staff were pushed hard and fast to implement the systems which they had been supported to develop.
- o While the collection of data is important, the training of DepEd staff, at all levels, in data analysis and the use of the results of analysis as a basis of planning has been limited.
- o The TDIS has only just being completed and has not been embedded.
- o While the 9 month extension allowed for the completion of the M&E system at school, Division and Regional level and for one year of synchronised testing of all systems; it was not possible to adjust and refine the synchronised systems.
- o Capacity building in T&D was effectively dropped in favour of finishing resource packages which went directly to schools. STRIVE was not able to validate the tools for capacitating staff at Regional level.

Despite the above dilemmas, the momentum of reform which has been achieved by STRIVE could still have been sustained if the proposed follow-up program in the education sector was ready to proceed. Unfortunately, this program has not yet been designed.

Given the above, AusAID needs to investigate the best approach to provide on-going TA support to sustain the momentum of reform which has been generated by STRIVE. TA should be directed to the provision of support in areas where there is already demand and demonstrated momentum for reform and/or where weaknesses have been observed in application of systems/approaches.

AusAID has already agreed to fund a small team of local TAs to continue to provide mentoring/coaching support to DepEd in the areas of Organisational Development, HR, Systems Analysis and Education Leadership and Management. However, the proposed level of support needs to be strengthened to ensure that there is no loss of momentum before the commencement of the proposed follow-up program, BEST. This matter is dealt with under Conclusions and Recommendations, (below); Appendix 4 contains a complete list of the TA requirements to ensure that the investment in STRIVE, and the significant achievements, are able to be sustained.

5. Gender Equality

The gender issues of greatest concern in the education sector in the Philippines include lack of gender perspective in teacher training, sexual harassment experienced by teachers and students, lack of funds for gender-related programs, weak GAD focal point system and the prevalence of societal stereotypes and gender bias in learning concepts.[35]

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[35] 'Accounting for Gender Results – A Review of the Philippine GAD Budget Policy' by Jeanne Frances I. Illo et al - Women and Gender Institute, Miriam College 2010

The DepEd is reported as having an 'inconsistent' record in mainstreaming gender. [36] This appears to result from limited understanding amongst the current DepEd senior management of gender mainstreaming and of the nature of a gender-aware organization, [37] the lack of a definitive and well-institutionalized GAD policy and a lack of direction in gender budget initiatives for the department.

Whilst textbook evaluation criteria now include GAD concerns, the impact of this initiative is dependent on the capacity of the evaluators and on how relevant the criteria are given current developments, particularly in the curriculum.

Within this context STRIVE has attempted to support the development of systems which aim to facilitate the move towards achieving gender equity outcomes like equal access of boys and girls to basic education; gender bias elimination; and empowerment of males and females to gain not only access but control over resources/service as learners, teachers, school head as well as non-teaching school, division, district, regional and central office staff.

A review of project data indicates the following achievements:

- In Stage 2 71% of participants in project activities were women. This is consistent with Stage 1 outcomes (64% women participants).

- The planning technology and E-BEIS developed through STRIVE reinforced DepED's practice of collecting sex disaggregated data, while the QAA component of SBM provided training to Regional level teams to analyse gender related information (e.g. ascertain if there are gender imbalances in key education indicators and if there are imbalances in access to education among boys and girls in their respective jurisdictions).

- For LRMDS, GAD considerations were incorporated in the Training Program for the A & E system, especially in the evaluation of learning resources/teaching resources/professional development materials through the formulation of standards/criteria. Indicators about GAD informed the revision of the framework & system guidelines before project completion.

- For T & D, there is provision for disaggregating male & female Training Needs Assessment (TNA) results for data processing & analysis which will inform professional development planning and program designing and delivery.

- All M & E teams underwent capability building to acquire technical competence in GAD Evaluation.

Consequent upon a range of interviews, meetings and conversations during the field visits, the ICR team found that, while sex-disaggregated data is collected at many (but not all) levels in the STRIVE pilot Regions, there is little evidence that this data has been analysed and used to design interventions that could improve gender equality and learning outcomes.

The ICR team did not detect any particular gender focus or concern in the SOBE and CLASS schools.

Despite the application of the gender lens in QA of LR materials the ICR team was not able to identify any tangible impact as a result of the application of this lens.

The team did not detect a strong awareness amongst teachers interviewed of GAD issues, nor a desire for professional development in this area.

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[36] Ibid pg 184
[37] Key advocates have retired.

The ICR Team experience appears to validate an observation made by the Gender Specialist in the Independent Progress Report of STRIVE [September 2009]:

- o *"At the Region and Division levels, there is awareness of certain differences in boys' and girls' school participation, performance, and education outcomes, but these remain principally as information, rarely as actionable points."*
- o *At the school level the primary focus is upon numerical or quantitative indicators, with little attention paid to qualitative information, such as possible gender and class differentiations in terms of the needs of boys and girls in the learning environment, pedagogy, materials, etc."[38]*

This is a disappointing result, although perhaps not surprising given the institutional context in DepEd.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The STRIVE M&E Framework has two objectives:

(i) To report relevant information regarding input level indicators and sustainability plan that will aid STRIVE management in ensuring sufficiency of and effective provision of input resources, their alignment to national standards; and development of appropriate sustainability strategies.
(ii) To support decision-making of management in the adjustment of implementation approaches and strategies, including the application of sustainability measures.

The ICR team observed that the introduction of the QA/M&E systems across all components has encouraged DepEd personnel to develop a deep and systemic commitment and engagement in monitoring for the purposes of improved management, accountability and learning. The quarterly reviews carried out at Division, Region and meta-Region levels have involved staff in the establishment of *standards,* as well as *targets,* against which progress is reviewed each quarter. Furthermore, staff is now expected to prepare correlations between variables influencing results and to discuss these at the quarterly reviews. This has led to the development of the "habit of accountability and transparency". These reviews have also encouraged DepEd personnel to develop the habit of "catching an issue before it becomes a bigger problem".

Many DepEd personnel interviewed were able to clearly articulate the important role of M&E in increasing knowledge about the gap between what was planned and what was achieved. In Region 7, the REXECOM staff further explained that: "It is the function of the TA Division to address the gap between what was planned and what was achieved and this leads to policy formulation in future."[39]

A range of studies have been conducted by the DepEd Regional M&E teams. The evaluation conducted to determine progress on intermediate results [Dec. 2009], as well as the study on the impact of the SOBE Program [June 2010] were carried out by these teams. The methodology was rigorous and resulted in the production of good data and quality results. The design and implementation of these studies by DepEd staff involved significant capacity building.

Despite the positive outcomes identified above, the quality of the data collected and the analytical capacity of DepEd staff still requires substantial improvement. Many DepEd personnel interviewed in the Divisions and Regions were aware of this.

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[38] STRIVE Final Independent Progress Report September 2009 pg 20
[39] Personal communication: Regional 7 REXECOM 1/3/11

7. Analysis and Learning

As indicated above STRIVE has been an outstanding success in strengthening education management and learning support systems in DepEd, as well as hastening and facilitating the process of reform. As such, the 'theory of change' which underpinned STRIVE, as well as the implementation processes, deserves to be the subject of detailed research. The STRIVE experience should also be used as the foundation for articulating the over-arching 'theory of change' underpinning AusAID's Education Delivery Strategy in the Philippines.

The success of STRIVE has resulted from the employment of:

(a) *A 'theory of change' which embedded change management and sustainability into all phases of the development work.* Development work was conducted in five (5) phases alongside the application of progressive strategies to manage change and sustainability issues and risks. The approach to integrating development work and management of change is illustrated below in Figure 1.[40]

The way in which the STRIVE team has worked has brought about a significant change in attitude to TA on the part of DepEd staff in the pilot Regions. These personnel have now experienced participation in systems development, rather than having TA do the work for them. Now they say "we need help with this" rather than "will you do it for us."

FIGURE 1: INTEGRATED APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT WORK AND MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

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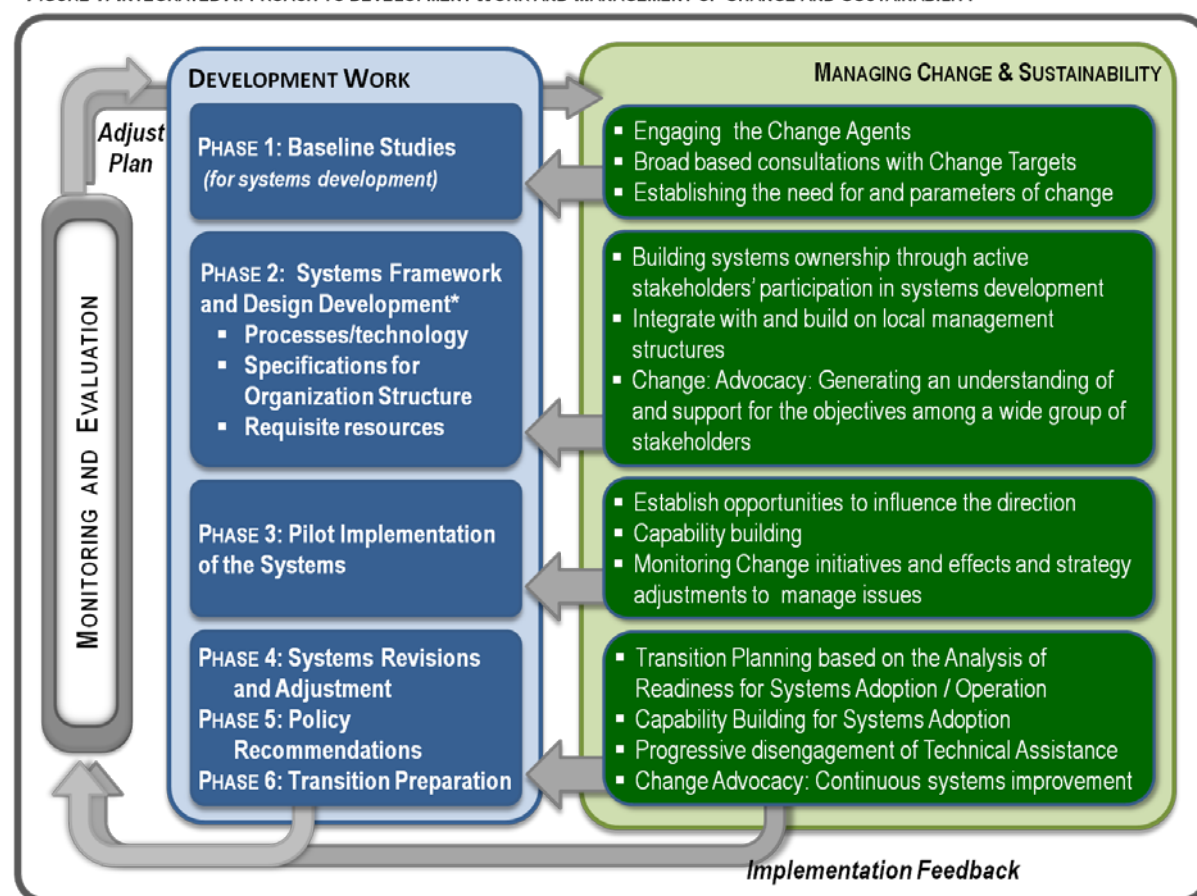
[40] Abstract on STRIVE 28th October, 2010 Ms. L. Velasco, Team Leader, STRIVE

(b) *An integrated Program which recognised that all elements of the education management and learning systems are interrelated.* STRIVE focused on improving the organisational structure at the Regional level; developing a range of interrelated systems and sub-systems and the professional habits required to implement those systems effectively. STRIVE personnel worked as a team, offering a common message that all elements of the education department must work cooperatively with one another, and with external stakeholders, if they are to succeed.

(c) *A highly competent and committed Team Leader and advisors* with a majority of local advisors

(d) *A flexible aid modality.* STRIVE was implemented by a Managing Contractor embedded within DepEd. In this respect the modality resembled the approach adopted by the multilateral development banks in providing technical assistance (TA) 'piggybacked' on a loan to support implementation. The modality is, therefore, more correctly termed a 'facilitating contractor' because of the focus on change management and institutional strengthening. The location of the STRIVE office in Manila also proved to be significant in facilitating reform. However, linking STRIVE with EDPITAF, rather than an organic unit may have compromised the potential effectiveness of the initiative.

Finally, it should be reiterated that each of the systems and approaches developed with the support of STRIVE have incorporated in-built mechanisms for analysis and learning [see Phase 4 in Figure 1, above]. The effect of these mechanisms was validated by the fact that a range of DepEd staff at Region and Division level were able to demonstrate to the ICR Team the way in which they had been modifying/improving systems over time to meet their needs. As discussed under M&E, above, the quarterly reviews at Division, Region and meta-Region level have led to an understanding of the importance of gathering accurate data and analysing that data in order to improve decision making and planning.

Evaluation Criteria Ratings

Evaluation Criteria Ratings	ICR Rating (1-6)	Explanation
Relevance:	6+	STRIVE was rated 6, Very high quality, at IPR stage. Since then, the relevance of the initiative has actually increased. This is best demonstrated by the degree to which the systems and approaches developed by STRIVE have been taken up at all levels.
Effectiveness:	6	**Aid Effectiveness**: STRIVE has met, and exceeded, its *SBM, T&D and LRMD component objectives* against all indicators. STRIVE has also effectively embedded the 'Quality Assurance' and 'Access/Equity' themes across all components. **Development Effectiveness:** STRIVE has had a significant impact upon the development process in the education sector in the Philippines.
Efficiency	6	STRIVE implementation processes are highly efficient. Given the level of outputs which have been provided 'above and beyond the call of duty' STRIVE represents outstanding value for money.
Sustainability	5	STRIVE has adopted a best practice approach to sustainability and has stimulated significant changes in the institutional culture and professional habits in DepEd. Efforts need to be made by AusAID to capitalise upon the momentum for change which currently exists.
Gender Equality	3	Despite efforts across a range of components and levels, achievement in achieving gender equality is disappointing.
Monitoring & Evaluation	6	In all aspects of the work the STRIVE technical advisory team has promoted a deep and systemic commitment and engagement in monitoring for the purposes of improved management, accountability and learning.
Analysis & Learning	5	The 'theory of change' which underpinned STRIVE, as well as the implementation processes, deserves to be the subject of detailed research. The STRIVE experience should also be used as the foundation for articulating the over-arching 'theory of change' underpinning AusAID's Education Delivery Strategy in the Philippines.

Rating scale:

Satisfactory		Less than satisfactory	
6	Very high quality	3	Less than adequate quality
5	Good quality	2	Poor quality
4	Adequate quality	1	Very poor quality

Conclusions and Recommendations

STRIVE Stage 2 is a rare event in the world of official development assistance. It is a highly relevant initiative which has not only been effective, but has gone well beyond expectations in terms of both outputs and outcomes. Given this, and the application of best practice implementation processes, STRIVE represents outstanding 'value for money' for AusAID and the Australian taxpayer. STRIVE has stimulated a degree of institutional culture change and change in the professional habits of DepEd staff which is truly remarkable. This has included the development of a strong commitment, in pilot Regions, Divisions and schools, to quality assurance, monitoring / evaluation and learning.

It does not detract from these achievements in any way to point out that the deep embedding of systems and professional habits cannot be expected to be achieved in merely four years. Moreover, three pilot regions, standing alone, are unlikely to be able to sustain the changes that have occurred without on-going assistance.

There is every indication that DepEd Senior Management is extremely impressed with the achievements of STRIVE and committed to the national roll-out of a range of systems and approaches which have been developed. This is a great achievement and clearly indicates that STRIVE has been 'punching above its weight' in achieving this degree of influence at the central level.

Nevertheless, the momentum for change which currently exists and the potential for Australia to make a truly significant contribution to the development of the education sector in the Philippines, literally stand on a knife's edge. Australia needs to provide immediate technical assistance to ensure that the systems and professional habits promulgated by STRIVE continue to be supported in the pilot regions. Australia further needs to offer on-going technical assistance to the current Administration to ensure that the national roll-out of a range of systems and approaches is carried out in a manner consistent with DepEd's capacity to manage and support the process.

If Australia is able to offer this assistance in a timely and appropriate manner, this will not only protect the investment which has already been made, but will also lay the foundation for a long and productive partnership between Australia and the Philippines in the development of the education sector.

The ICR team commends the following recommendations to GoA / GoP for consideration.

It is recommended:

No.	Recommendation
1	**THAT** the STRIVE experience be used as the foundation for articulating the over-arching 'theory of change' underpinning AusAID's Education Delivery Strategy in the Philippines.
2	**THAT** AusAID support, in all ways possible, the finalisation of the DepEd National Rationalisation Plan (RP) and the Performance Management System supporting this plan.
3	**THAT** an in-house AusAID Task Force be established at the Post, including decision makers, to ensure that existing and planned initiatives in the Education Sector are consistent with, and strengthen, the systems, approaches and professional habits which have been successfully developed under STRIVE.
4	**THAT** AusAID investigate the best approach to provide on-going TA support to sustain the momentum of reform which has been generated by STRIVE. TA should be directed to the provision of support in areas where there is already demand and demonstrated momentum for reform and/or where weaknesses have been observed in application of systems/approaches. A detailed outline of TA support required is attached as Appendix 4.
5.	**THAT** AusAID specifically support DepEd to implement the strategies for EBEIS roll-out articulated in the STRIVE document 'Report on Recommendations for System Rollout' November 15, 2010.
6.	**THAT** the EBEIS/LR infrastructure (notably the Server) be handed over – at program end - from STRIVE to EDPITAF, rather than DepEd, pending capacity building of the ICT Unit within OPS on the maintenance and administration of the system.
7.	Further, if TA support is to be provided under the Philippines-Australia Human Resource and Organisational Development Facility [HRODF], it is recommended: **THAT** local TAs, with in-depth experience working on STRIVE, be contracted to assist DepEd to develop an HR/OD proposal for TA support under the HRODF in order to avoid distraction or 'factionalisation' of elements of the unified systems introduced by STRIVE.
8.	**THAT** due notice is taken of experience regarding the value of a team approach to TA support by appointment of a TA Coordinator rather than deploying individual TAs.