Strengthening Implementation of Visayas Education (STRIVE)

AidWorks Initiative Number

FINAL INDEPENDENT PROGRESS REPORT

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Aid Activity Summary

Aid Activity Name	Strengthening Implementation of Visayas Education (STRIVE)		
AidWorks initiative No.	INF824		
	Stage 1:	**Bridging Phase**	**Stage 2**
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Implementing Partner(s)	Department of Education		
Country/Region	Philippines/Asia		
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Acknowledgments

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMC	Australian Managing Contractor
APD	Australian Project Director
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao
BESRA	Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda
CLC	Community Learning Centre
DepED	Department of Education
EDPITAF	Educational Development Projects Implementing Task Force
GoA	Government of Australia
LGU	Local Government Unit
LRMDS	Learning Resource Materials Development System
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDI/GRM	Melbourne Development Institute
NEAP	National Educators' Academy of the Philippines
NCBTS	National Competency Based Teacher Standards
OSC	Out of School Children (up to age 12)
OSY	Out of School Youth (up to age 21)
PCC	Project Coordinating Committee
PPD	Philippine Project Director
PPM	Philippine Project Manager
RD	Regional Director
GOP	Government of the Philippines
SARDO	Students at Risk of Dropping Out
SBM	School Based Management
SDS	Schools Division Superintendent
SEDIP	Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SOBE	Support Options for Basic Education
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
TEEP	Third Elementary Education Project
T& D	Training and Development
TWG	Technical Working Group
TOR	Terms of Reference
STRIVE	Strengthening the Implementation of Basic Education in Selected Provinces in the Visayas
WB	World Ban

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). The initiative was intended to be the precursor to widespread implementation of the BESRA reforms by DepEd with support from the major loan and donor-funded development investment programs.

Review Findings

2.   **Relevance:**   It is rare to encounter an initiative which represents the right response, at the right time, using the right approach. STRIVE is such an initiative. It is not only consistent with GOP and GoA policies but is, as was intended, the vanguard for change in the education sector in the Philippines.

3.   **Effectiveness:** The initiative is on track to achieve its objectives. Overall, the IPR team observed a clear and tangible movement in the mind-set of DepEd staff involved in STRIVE towards an *understanding* of the value of evidence based planning/decision making and a *willingness* to improve skills in this area.

4.   **SBM:** DepEd personnel in Regions VI, VII and VIII have made a promising start in developing a working knowledge of the SBM policy, program, system framework and QA requirements. This level of awareness and proficiency needs to be contrasted with the low levels of awareness of SBM reported in non-STRIVE regions.

5.   SBM ACCESS is not only developing the capacity of the schools to identify needs and develop solutions; it is also developing understanding at the school level that school communities have the right to look to the division/region for support (TA) using the T&D & LRMDS systems and facilities.

6.   The SBM systems introduced by STRIVE are perceived to provide clarity and coherence in the working environment and a way to protect resources.   The systems also provide motivation, and a mechanism, to seek assistance from a broader range of stakeholders. The IPR Report identifies three areas for improvement.

7.   STRIVE supported the SBM TWG in developing a framework and guidelines for the restructuring of Regions Vi, VII and VIII. Despite delays in receiving DepEd approval for the pilot restructuring, the process is now underway. Region 12 has also started work on pilot restructuring with assistance from the OD Technical Advisor of BESRA with funding assistance from AusAID.

8.   **HR-INSET:** At the present time, the three Visayas regions have developed a unified T&D system, and produced a four-volume T&D System Operations Manual. The National Competency-Based Teachers' Standards (NCBTS) Teachers' Strengths-Needs Analysis (TSNA) and TDNA for School Heads (TDNASH) have been completed in the pilot schools, as well as the TDNA for division and regional personnel. The TDNA-IPPD system has been endorsed by the TEDP TWG of BESRA and DepEd has rolled it out nationwide. The IPR Report identifies three areas where improvements in the system might be achieved.

9.   **LRMDS:** The web based LRM Development System is complete, resource materials are currently being uploaded. The LRMDS will be piloted in the three (3) regions in the Visayas.   Roll-out in other regions will await the results of the pilot. This is a DepEd owned system which contains references to quality assured, hard copy, as well as digitalized resources and includes many of the materials produced under previous donor supported initiatives. The IPR Report identifies three areas where the system may be improved.

10.   **Project Management:** The IPR Team identified a number of areas where the structure/functions at DepEd Central Office appear to have inhibited STRIVE's operational effectiveness. These include delays both in the provision of technical resources, approvals and standards/guidelines and delays in accessing SPHERE funds and in provision of MOOE funds. The quality of performance of the TWGs is variable.

11.   There appears to have been a break-down in the intended relationship between the work of STRIVE in the development and testing of systems and the use of collected data and lessons learned to influence national level policy making /formulation and the BESRA 'roll-out'.

12.   Virtually all DepEd staff involved in STRIVE commented upon the strains placed upon them by having to fulfil their normal work duties, as well as STRIVE duties. It is anticipated that this pressure will reduce as the restructuring takes effect and the systems are bedded down.

13.   **Efficiency:** A detailed cost effectiveness analysis was not required as part of this IPR. However, initial data emerging from STRIVE suggests a number of areas where detailed research may be fruitful.

14.   AusAID's management of the contract of the STRIVE initiative suggests that the complexity and timing of the contracting and approval processes in Canberra may be out of step with the devolution of responsibilities to the Post.   The resulting delays have inhibited the smooth and uninterrupted implementation of agreed forms of development assistance.

15.   **Impact:** STRIVE has met/exceeded the 'process' outcomes targeted in the AusAID Philippines Country Strategy Performance Assessment Framework. STRIVE has had substantial short term impact in terms of the contributions of the initiative to the readiness for roll-out of SBM materials, School Improvement Plan Manuals and tools / instruments for the assessment of SBM readiness in the schools. STRIVE'S work has also had some short term impact in terms of learning outcomes.

16.   **Sustainability:** The IPR team found clear evidence in the target Regions/Divisions/schools of commitment/engagement and developing capacity to implement the new systems with the support of STRIVE. Nevertheless, capacity is variable across Regions and components. Genuine sustainability will require deepening and embedding of the practices currently being employed.

17.   DepEd Central appears to be making progress in budgeting for the recurrent costs of the STRIVE systems. However, the IPR Team has serious concerns as to the degree to which organizational learning is taking place at Central level as a result of the work being carried out in the STRIVE Regions. If this is not addressed it has the potential to undermine the BESRA reforms.

18.   The LRMDS and T&D systems are likely to be sustained in some form, even if the administration changes following the upcoming election. The SBM approach is also likely to remain as a policy focus. However, if the assistance from the SBM TWG to the Regions and Divisions to develop and use the SBM support systems does not continue, the policy goal will not be realized and the achievements of STRIVE in this area will not be sustained.

19.   **Gender Equality:** STRIVE has fulfilled its formal requirements in relation to the Harmonized Gender Guidelines and has been rated as "gender sensitive" (8.59), which is an improvement from the previous year (6.08). Nevertheless, the IPR team observed that there has, so far, been a greater focus on a 'supply side' approach to gender, emphasizing organization, project management, processes and teachers, and less on the 'demand side', that is, identifying the gender-related issues affecting learners.   Practically speaking, STRIVE is only just beginning to consciously identify and address gender issues.

22.   **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The STRIVE M&E system produces adequate data for accountability, management and learning. The M&E system developed at Regional and Division levels has been readily adopted and understood by DepEd staff at these levels and is consistent with DepEd systems. STRIVE has also made major contributions to DepEd's information management systems.

25.   **Analysis and Learning:** The design, processes and systems of STRIVE are characterized by a strong focus on analysis and learning across all components and all levels. This is counter-balanced by the existing structures/mechanisms at DepEd Central which tend to hamper attempts to systematize analysis and learning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

26.   There is a strong case for extension of the term of STRIVE 2 to facilitate a deepening and consolidation of the work currently being carried out in the three Target regions. STRIVE's effectiveness in contributing to and informing the policy formulation process may be significantly enhanced by the engagement of a Policy Analyst within the technical assistance team. There is also be scope for AusAID to develop a facility, as part of an extended STRIVE, which could provide 'direct funding' to Regions and Divisions which demonstrate genuine commitment in acquiring the core capacities required to sustain both the organisation and the new systems. DepED is in full agreement with these statements.

27.   The IPR Team urges AusAID to engage in dialogue with DepEd Senior Management on ways to reinvigorate the link between the work of STRIVE in the development and testing of systems and the use of collected data and lessons learned from this work to influence national level policy making/formulation and the BESRA 'roll-out'. Finally, it is recommended that consideration be given to including a position of Gender and Education Specialist in an 'extended' STRIVE Stage 2 to focus on organizational development, teachers' development, learner needs and situations, and M&E and reporting requirements.

Evaluation Criteria Ratings

Evaluation Criteria	Rating (1-6)	Explanation
Relevance	6	The initiative is highly relevant in terms of need, as well as GOP and GoA policies and the Philippines Country Strategy.
Effectiveness	5	The initiative is on track to achieve its objectives. However, DepEd Central appears to have had difficulty in facilitating and supporting STRIVE's work and has not, as yet, fully capitalised upon the achievements and the learnings of STRIVE in order to influence policy development and program considerations.
Efficiency	4	The initiative appears to have made effective use of time and resources to achieve outcomes.
Sustainability	4	DepEd staff working on STRIVE clearly demonstrate commitment/ engagement and the capacity to implement the new systems, although the latter capacity varies across regions and components. A number of systems are already being rolled out beyond the STRIVE regions. There are serious concerns, however, as to the degree to which organizational learning is taking place at Central level as a result of the work of STRIVE.
Gender Equality	4	STRIVE Stage 2 has been rated as "gender sensitive" (8.59), which is an improvement from the previous year (6.08).
Monitoring & Evaluation	5	The M&E System effectively measures progress towards meeting objectives and is integrated within DepEd M&E Systems.
Analysis & Learning	4	Analysis and learning is inherent in the design, processes and systems of STRIVE. However, the existing structures and mechanisms within DepEd Central hamper attempts to systematize analysis and learning throughout the department.

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

Introduction

Objectives, design and implementation history of STRIVE

The STRIVE project was designed as a flexible and responsive mechanism to assist the Department of Education (DepED) improve access to and the quality of basic education in the Visayas. Stage 1 was implemented from October 2005 to July 2007 and focused on Bohol (Region VII) and Northern Samar (Region VIII) divisions. Activities were undertaken in two main components, the Leadership and Management Development and Programs for Out of School Children, Youth and their Families with a view to implementing the two other components (teacher training and teaching/learning materials).

In April and May 2006, a Feasibility Study was commissioned by AusAID to assess the feasibility of an expansion of STRIVE in Stage 2. The study recommended an expansion covering 5 years and 16 Divisions with significantly increased funding. However, with the new Australian policy directions and emergence of other AusAID initiatives (Support for Philippine Basic Education Reforms - SPHERE), the scope and approach of Stage 2 of STRIVE was revisited.

On 31 August 2006, following the release of the AusAID Scoping Study to determine the proposed scope and nature of future AusAID support to education, AusAID provided the guidelines for the design of STRIVE Stage 2, indicating that Stage 2 would be for three years and implemented on a rolling plan format. While the design was being finalised, an interim bridging activity was funded from the completion of Stage 1 – April to June 2007. Stage 2 is implemented from July 2007 to June 2010.

The goal of STRIVE Stage 2 is to contribute to the improvement in the quality of and access to basic education in the Visayas. The purpose is to develop, support and strengthen education management and learning support systems for improved access to quality basic education, within the national Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda. Stage 2 focuses on the gaps in the effectiveness and quality of the essential 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). While implementation occurs in all three Visayas regions (VI, VII and VIII), outputs are directly informing 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 and will serve as a platform to support BESRA implementation.

Evaluation Objectives and Questions

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for this Independent Progress Review (IPR) are attached as Appendix 1. The TOR cites two objectives for the review:

(a) To assess and rate the progress of STRIVE against eight evaluation criterion[1] and provide recommendations on areas for improvement during the remainder of Phase 2.
(b) To assess the feasibility of- and provide options for- extending and expanding STRIVE for another 18 months within what is allowed under AusAID's Procurement Policies.

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

Evaluation Scope and Methods

The Evaluation Plan for the IPR is attached as Appendix 2. The Evaluation Scope and Methods involved a desk review, a field visit to the Visayas and Manila from 21-30 July, consultations with key stakeholders, analysis, feedback and reporting. The IPR 'Team Itinerary and List of Persons Met' is attached as Appendix 3. Review Instruments were developed to guide the work of the IPR Team. These instruments were the subject of discussion and dialogue with AusAID Canberra and Manila before being finalised.

Limitations:

(i) During Entry Briefings, it was confirmed that Review Objective (b) was not, in fact, intended to suggest that the IPR Team carry out a feasibility study. It was agreed that if the review function is carried out effectively, it is then incumbent upon AusAID to determine whether or not the feasibility of an extension or expansion needs to be explored further.

(ii) 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. Given the broader implications of this methodological difficulty, it will need to be addressed by the Office of Development Effectiveness, AusAID.

Evaluation Team

The IPR Team comprised:
- Kaye A. Bysouth, Performance, Quality & Evaluation Specialist; Team Leader
- Vicente Reyes, Jr. Basic Education Specialist
- Jeanne Frances Illo Gender Specialist
- Napoleon Imperial Chief Economic Development Specialist, Education and Manpower Development Division, Social Development Staff, National Economic and Development Authority; NEDA representative on all BESRA Technical Working Groups
- Ellaine G. Viray Snr. Economic Development Specialist / AusAID Desk Officer, NEDA
- 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, gender, economics, 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 are not members of program/implementation teams in their respective agencies. Napoleon Imperial has been a major contributor to the development of the education sector in the Philippines and is currently an advisor to DepEd BESRA, as well as the NEDA representative on all BESRA TWGs. Without the depth of knowledge and insights provided by Napoleon Imperial, the work of the team would have been far more difficult and, no doubt, less realistic.

Evaluation Findings

1. Relevance

It is rare to encounter an initiative which represents the right response, at the right time, using the right approach. STRIVE is such an initiative. It is not only consistent with GOP and GoA policies but, as was intended, it is the vanguard for change in the education sector in the Philippines.

- ### *Government of the Philippines policies*

Based upon the Project Evaluation Report (as presented to the Investment Coordination Committee – Cabinet Committee on 7 June 2007) the objectives and components of STRIVE Stage 2 are supportive of the Basic Education strategies stipulated in the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) 2004-2010. STRIVE Stage 2 is particularly relevant in the following areas: (i) promotion of the School-Based Management; (ii) improvement in the quality of teacher education and training; and (iii) provision of quality learning materials that would make the teaching-learning experience more meaningful to both teachers and students.

Moreover, STRIVE Stage 2 is 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.

With its focus on improving reform and support systems at the regional level across the Visayas, STRIVE Stage 2 is set to reinforce the effectiveness of implementation and to build-up long term sustainability of the BESRA efforts and complement the World Bank supported National Program Support for Basic Education (NPSBE).

- ### *Australian Aid Objectives*

When the STRIVE initiative was originally designed, economic growth was the central pillar of the Australian development assistance program. Since that time, education has also become one of the key drivers of the aid program and receives the highest level of investment support in the Philippines program.

While the AusAID Education Policy and Operational Frameworks are still in the process of being finalised, there is an emerging consensus that the three pillars of the policy and operations will involve:

1. Promoting Access and Equity
2. Improving Quality with a major new focus on Early Childhood and 'Whole of Education' programs.
3. Strengthening the links between schools, skills and livelihoods.

STRIVE is, therefore, more relevant to Australian Aid Objectives today than it was at the time of project design.

- ### *Philippines Country Strategy*

The Philippines program has progressively moved from supporting a disparate group of education projects in various provinces and at various levels of government, to developing a coherent program of support in concert with other donors and the International Development Banks (IDBs).   This shift commenced after the 2006 Scoping Study for a partnership between AusAID and the World Bank which noted that: "The present proposal to collaborate with the WB and support the NPSBE provides a unique window of opportunity to: (i) achieve strategic system-wide engagement in policy development and implementation and (ii) scale up successful outputs from previous and current projects into broad and sustainable outcomes for basic education delivery across the nation."

STRIVE Stage 2 represents a critical part of this shift in approach.

The intention was for STRIVE to act as a vanguard, developing and testing support systems in SBM, HRD(INSET) and LRM. 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.

- *Aid Modality*

The aid modality of STRIVE, a flexible program approach embedded within DepEd, directly addresses the intent of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action. STRIVE's entire modus operandi is to strengthen the capacity of DepEd to lead and manage development in the education sector in the Philippines. STRIVE is working from the *inside* to use and develop DepEd systems. At the same time, STRIVE is gathering together and incorporating the best of the work produced under a range of donor initiatives; by retrieving these 'sunk costs' STRIVE is retrospectively addressing the results of aid fragmentation in the education sector in the past

2. Effectiveness

The STRIVE Purpose statement focuses on assisting DepEd to develop and/or enhance and test systems that improve the Regions' and Divisions' capability in providing technical assistance to schools, particularly the low performance ones, in addressing access related concerns and in scaling-up the innovations developed in STRIVE 1. STRIVE Phase 2 focuses on essential support systems for SBM, HRD (INSET) and LRM.

In order to achieve this purpose the design adopted a multi-level approach to supporting selected systems. This involved working with the Central Office on system design (policy, standards, frameworks); with the Regional Office on Support Systems and QA (M&E, TA, Training); with the Division Office on implementation management (Operations) and with the school on implementation.

Before discussing the effectiveness of STRIVE in introducing specific systems within Components, it is worth reflecting upon the most critical system of all – analytical thinking. The IPR Team found that an extremely important shift can be perceived in the targeted Regions and Divisions in terms of understanding both the process and role of data collection and analytical thinking as a basis for improving performance.

The IPR Team observed that the initiative has facilitated participating DepEd staff, across all STRIVE components, to improve the effectiveness of their work practices. This has involved collecting baseline data; analyzing that data; using the results of analysis to formulate plans to achieve specific (BESRA) outcomes; monitoring implementation of the plans; and regularly reflecting upon results and adjusting the plans where they are failing to achieve desired results. The observed capacity to carry out these processes is, naturally, uneven within/between Regions, across components and in relation to specific cross-cutting issues (e.g. gender). DepEd advised that this variation can be attributed to turnover of membership and change in designations at the initial stage of engagement brought about by movements and promotions of some organic staff.

Nevertheless, the IPR team observed a clear and tangible movement in the mind-set of DepEd staff involved in STRIVE towards an *understanding* of the value of evidence based planning and decision making and a *willingness* to improve their skills in this area. The achievement of this shift in work culture is as significant as it is difficult to achieve and deserves to be recognized as a great achievement.

By contrast, the IPR Team has serious concerns that the current structure, functions and work culture of the Central Office bureaucracy may inhibit, rather than support STRIVE's effectiveness in the field and fail to capitalise on the work of STRIVE to improve policy making and programming.

Component 1:	School Based Management (SBM) Support System

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

- **SBM Systems:**

Before SBM systems could be developed, advocacy interventions had to be included as a major element of almost all project activities to help inform the Regions, Divisions and schools about BESRA and SBM. This input was required because instructions from the Central Office in relation to BESRA had been fragmented and piecemeal. The result was that SBM was not well understood and Regional and Division offices were engaging in overlapping activities in their effort to support SBM implementation in the schools.

STRIVE supported the SBM TWG and the BESRA Secretariat to organise a BESRA 'caravan' in Bohol and Northern Samar which provided orientation on the Reform Agenda and the SBM assessment approach.

Consequent upon these, and other, awareness raising activities and restructuring of the Regions (discussed below), STRIVE Stage 2 has conducted baseline analyses, and prepared frameworks and system designs for the Education Governance Mechanism; the Region Education Development Planning mechanism; the QAA System; and the SBM M&E System. STRIVE is already piloting SBM Planning (School Implementation Plan / Access Implementation Plan); Division Education Development Planning; the Resource Mobilization and Management System (SOBE & CLASS); and EMIS (enhanced BEIS, T&D IS and LRMD ICT).

The IPR Team was able to meet and hold discussions with the SBM teams from Regions 6, 7 and 8. These DepEd teams have made a promising start in developing a working knowledge of the SBM policy, program, system framework and QA requirements. They have prepared SBM baseline reports, as well as baseline reports on access, developed SBM systems and guidelines and SBM M&E Operational Frameworks. The IPR Team observed the DepEd staff in the targeted Regions and Divisions to be confident in their work not only because they now have clear guidelines/standards/tools to use in their work, but also because they have participated in the development of these guidelines/standards/tools. The SBM teams (along with other STRIVE teams) also demonstrate a cooperative and collaborative approach to their work, as well as a sense of accountability for assigned tasks.

This level of awareness and proficiency needs to be contrasted with the low levels of awareness of SBM reported in non-STRIVE regions. The Fourth BESRA Joint Review Mission found that "awareness and understanding of SBM remained at the basic level and widely varied within the division and at the school level."[2]

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[2] PHILIPPINES Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) Fourth Joint Implementation Review Mission: February 16 to 27, 2009 Aide Memoir Item 13.

The key **strengths** of the SBM systems introduced by STRIVE, as perceived by the recipients, are the degree to which the systems provide clarity and coherence in the working environment, a way to protect resources; a motivation to use their own resources and a mechanism to seek assistance from a broader range of stakeholders.

The identified **areas for improvement** are as follows:

- o STRIVE also needs to catch up in respect of the multilingual education (MLE) policy which was formulated by the TWG on National Learning Strategy (NLS) and has already been officially enunciated by DepEd, MLE needs to be built into at least two components (e.g. LRMDS and T&D) as soon as practicable.

- o The IPR Team also understands that a policy is soon to be officially released adopting the School Governing Council (SGC), rather than the School Advisory Council, as the preferred governance model at school level. The SGC model aims for a balance between Principal empowerment and the involvement of school stakeholders in school policy making. STRIVE needs to integrate this policy into systems building and training. It is understood that this matter is currently included in the action plan of the SBM TWG to be worked out with the Office of Planning Service**.**

- o The IPR experience confirms the finding of the STRIVE Baseline Study that there is a fragmented and somewhat confused understanding of alternative delivery modes and alternative delivery systems as models for improving access[3]. It is noted that the SOBE TAs focus on process facilitation and do not provide advice on content areas such as ALS and ADMs; the technical assistance regarding these areas is left to the specialists in the division. Nevertheless, the STRIVE TAs may need to draw to the attention of the divisions the continuing confusion around ADM and ALS.

- • ***Restructuring of the regions:***

During the early stages of implementation of STRIVE Stage 2 it was recognized that the regional institutional structure was not conducive to the implementation of the reforms proposed under BESRA, nor did the structure facilitate the effective performance of functions as mandated in RA 9155. Hence, STRIVE adjusted the coverage of Component 1: SBM to include a pilot test of a regional structure re-organized in accordance to the functions under RA 9155. Thereafter, STRIVE supported the SBM TWG in developing a framework for the restructuring of the Regions and Divisions, as well as providing guidelines for regional re-structuring (including an HR Management Systems Framework and M&E Scheme and tools).[4] STRIVE also assisted the Regional Change Management Teams and RO personnel to prepare for the restructuring.

Final approval to go ahead with the pilot restructuring was granted on 5 May 2009, some four months after presentation of the proposal to the BESRA TWG. The restructuring is now being implemented in Region VI; restructuring will commence in Region VII on 1st September and preparations are underway in Region VIII. Region 12 has also started work on pilot restructuring with assistance from the OD Technical Advisor of BESRA with funding assistance from AusAID.

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[3] Synthesis of STRIVE Component Baseline Studies July 2008

[4] In order to initiate the work at the regional level, the BESRA- SBM TWG issued a DepED memorandum dated August 20, 2008 addressed to the three Regional Directors of Regions 6, 7, and 8. The memorandum provided guidelines on how to proceed with the re-organization process to ensure alignment with R. A. 9155 and the policy actions of BESRA.

The IPR Team received clear feedback from Regional officials that, in their view, the restructuring is an essential precursor for the effective implementation of the BESRA reform agenda. Unless and until this restructuring is endorsed by DepEd Central Office, Regional officials remain in an insecure situation.

Further, according to the current timeline, when STRIVE Stage 2 concludes, insufficient time will have elapsed to fully support the restructuring initiatives. This would have major consequences for the sustainability of the restructuring in the target Regions, as well as upon the roll-out of BESRA. This is an argument for extension of the initiative in order to facilitate data gathering and documentation of lessons learned related to the effect of the restructuring efforts.

The IPR team understands that STRIVE has been requested by the DepEd Secretary to liaise with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) on the restructuring issue which represents a positive signal from DepEd Central that they are moving towards institutionalization of the regional restructuring across the nation. It is essential that this process continues. As the February 2009 BESRA Joint Review Mission noted: "The successful implementation of the reform agenda under Republic Act 9155 requires a clear definition of roles and responsibilities between the different DepEd agencies and levels. Some Regions have begun to redefine their institutional arrangements but this has to be formalized within a legitimate framework of the Implementing Rules and Regulations."[5]

Delay and/or derailment of restructuring institutional arrangements in the regions would have a significant dampening impact on STRIVE as a catalyst for the roll-out of BESRA. Clearly, AusAID has an important advocacy role to play at the highest levels in this matter.

- **SBM ACCESS:**

The IPR Review Team met with members of the Regional Access Task Force at Region, Division and School level. It was evident from consultations that whilst there have always been concerns about the DGOP Out Rate (DOR) in schools, prior to STRIVE there was no organised approach to identifying the location-specific causes of the problem, nor were there customised approaches to reducing the DOR. Consultations with relevant DepEd staff, as well as parent, local government and community stakeholders indicate an appreciation of the value of the training received from STRIVE in analysing the local situation and in developing proposals to address local problems. Training in planning, management and evaluation is also valued and, above all, is being used to improve implementation performance.

SBM ACCESS is not only developing the capacity of the schools to identify needs and develop solutions; it is also developing understanding at the school level that school communities have the right to look to the division/region for support (TA) using the T&D & LRMDS systems and facilities.

Similarly, while the STRIVE special funds (SOBE and CLASS) are used by schools to address immediate problems, they are also being used as leverage funds so that schools/clusters can engage in resource mobilization from other sources for additional elements of their School Improvement Plans.

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[5] PHILIPPINES Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) Fourth Joint Implementation Review Mission: February 16 to 27, 2009 Aide Memoir Item 13.

The IPR Team had the opportunity to meet with School Communities that had been supported under STRIVE 1 and those supported during the Transition Phase and during STRIVE 2.[6] From this (albeit limited) exposure, it would appear that the work of the STRIVE 1 schools was extremely impressive, with Principals, teachers, parents, LGU and other stakeholders demonstrating evidence based knowledge of the problems of drop-outs and students at risk of dropping out and the challenges facing the school as a whole. The school communities had developed meaningful School Improvement Plans for addressing the challenges and strong capacity for mobilizing resources (financial and other). They were clearly not solely dependent upon donor funds to take action to implement their plans.

In a number of the STRIVE 2 pilot schools visited the focus appeared somewhat narrower. While these schools had prepared a School Improvement Plan (SIP), they had also been provided with training to write a proposal to gain access to SOBE funding. This latter emphasis appeared to have resulted in a narrowing of the vision and capacity for independent action (i.e. with or without donor support) which had been observed in the STRIVE 1 pilot schools. Despite the IPR team's perception, the STRIVE team is confident that the STRIVE 2 schools will manifest the same degree of knowledge, skills and independence as the STRIVE 1 schools as they progress, because the same approaches are being used in these schools as were tested during STRIVE 1.

Component 2:	HR-INSET (Training and Development)

This component aims to develop a Regional HR-INSET system for quality professional development of education managers, school heads, teachers and non-teaching staff.

The Training and Development (T&D) system is composed of three interrelated subsystems: (1) the Needs Assessment-Individual Plan for Professional Development (TDNA-IPPD) system, which identifies priority training needs; (2) the Program Planning and Designing System (PPDS), which produces the Master Plans for Professional Development (MPPD) with appropriate training designs, programs and resource mobilization plans; and (3) the Program Delivery System, which is the main intervention that has direct impact in the KSAs of the education personnel.

At the present time, the three Visayas regions have developed a unified T&D system, and produced a four volume T&D System Operations Manual. The National Competency-Based Teachers' Standards (NCBTS) Teachers' Strengths- Needs Analysis (TSNA) and TDNA for School Heads (TDNASH) have been completed in the pilot schools, as well as the TDNA for division and regional personnel.

TSNAs are consolidated at the school level and result in the school training priorities. T&D packages are being prepared based on priorities set by schools. Program delivery has just begun with the project training T&D participants on the preparation of the Program Delivery System Framework.

The TDNA-IPPD system developed by STRIVE was endorsed by the TEDP TWG of BESRA and it has been rolled out nationwide. The February BESRA review mission reported that "90% of the Teacher Education Institutions have adopted the National Competency Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) and initial activities were undertaken to apply the standards in terms of hiring, promotion and performance appraisal."[7]

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[6] Under STRIVE Stage 2 additional pilot schools were identified for support under this component bringing the number from 10 (during Stage 1) to 46 (during Stage 2).
[7] Philippines Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) Fourth Joint Implementation Review Mission: February 16-27, 2009 Aide Memoir pg. 2

In addition to the development of the T&D System, STRIVE is also assisting the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) to craft the appropriate policies, specifications, standards and organisational framework to support regionalization of training and development through the T&D Centers / Regional NEAP. Included in the plan is the proposal to decentralize training funds.

The IPR Team notes that the delivery system may not be completed before the scheduled end of STRIVE Stage 2. Again, there is an argument for extending the initiative in order to facilitate completion of the delivery system.

The key **strengths** of the T & D system are the following:
- once the system is in place, training will be integrated and more coherent;
- tools will be available for identifying needs and developing plans; and
- training programs are/will be needs based
- training can be carried out locally.

The identified **areas for improvement** include:

o The need for greater integration of the work being carried out in the T&D and LRMDS areas. This integration is articulated in the Synchronized and Integrated Systems for Managing Schools (refer pg 11 below) but has not, as yet, occurred to any great extent. In order to facilitate the process of integration, T&D implementers are also involved with the C.3. LRMDS development work and training activities. Nevertheless, there is still a need to 'bed down' the integration of these systems and this is a strong argument for an extension of Stage 2.

o The need to explicitly identify the critical role of SBM in holding school heads and teachers accountable to undergo the training and development required to improve learning outcomes.

o The need to fully implement the gender equality approach as outlined in the PDD; the June 2009 action plan needs to be reviewed and improved. It is understood that this process had been commenced at the time of the IPR.

o The need to accelerate the process of involvement of selected Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in order to ensure that some aspects of the training and development and institutional capability building are incorporated into pre-service teacher education as a sustainability measure[8]. STRIVE also needs to emphasize the national decision to institutionalize the Regional Educators Academy (REA) under the NEAP family.

Component 3: Learning Resources Materials and Development System (LRMD

This component aims to develop systems for assessing, acquiring, adapting, developing, producing and distributing quality learning resource materials for students and instructional support materials for teachers.

The LRMDS is a web based catalogue and repository of learning, teaching and professional development resources. It functions as a clearinghouse; that is, the LRMDS provides information about the location of resources (hardcopy and softcopy) and allows users of the system to access directly digitized versions of resources that are published and stored within the LRMDS repository. It is also a quality assurance system providing support to DepED Regions, Divisions and Schools in the selection and acquisition of quality digital and non-digital resources in response to identified local educational needs.

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[8] Previously Output 2.5 and now integrated under Output 2.3.

At the time of conduct of the IPR review, the LRMDS is complete and resource materials are currently being uploaded. DepED has given clearance to pilot the LRMDS in the STRIVE regions with the intention to roll out in other regions based upon the results of the STRIVE pilot. The IPR Team was 'walked through' the on-line system which has extraordinary potential.

The key **strengths** of the LRMDS system are the following:
- The LRMDS is a DepEd owned system which has been developed 'from the ground up' with the potential to expand as needs require.
- The resources in the LRMDS are not only digitalized resources; the system contains references to hard copy resources and notes their location.
- All the resources listed have been quality assured in terms of subject matter, pedagogy and social indicators (e.g. including gender)
- The system allows for all schools to register and access the system, if necessary, through an internet café where the school does not have internet access. In time, all teachers will be able to register to access the system.
- The system provides for schools and teachers to submit resources for quality assessment and, if approved, for publishing on the portal.
- The system has provided a repository for many of the materials produced under previous donor supported initiatives (including from PASMEP, PROBE, PRODED, BEAM, TEEP, SEDIP, etc) to ensure that they are utilized, not lost.

A key 'value added' noted by the IPR Team was that in Region 6 the LRMDS has been used to ward off attempts by local politicians to supply schools with inappropriate learning materials, thereby helping to avoid waste and corruption.

The identified **areas for improvement** in respect of the system are:
- The need to provide adequate search facilities to identify gender sensitive solutions to learning difficulties.

- The need to complete the Application Program Interface (API) with the ACUMEN system of BEAM. In this regard, an agreement was reached between BEAM and STRIVE to the effect that STRIVE would prepare the specifications of the API and BEAM would complete the work. STRIVE has completed its part of the agreement but apparently BEAM has not, as yet, fulfilled its commitment. AusAID needs to follow up on this matter.

- The need for DepEd Central to ensure that the Enterprise Architecture for ICT in the department builds upon the systems being developed by STRIVE so that there is one clear direction for ICT.

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Component 4:	Project Management

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

- ***Management by the Australian contractor***

Relevant 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. The IPR team observed that very effective professional relationships have been established within STRIVE. 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. This was a sound and important response to need and it also recognised the reality that unless and until the TWGs were able to develop and implement their work plans, STRIVE's work with the regions would be delayed. Indeed as one Chair of a TWG put it: "STRIVE has been the key to the rescue of the TWGs"[9]

Despite the benefits, it is estimated that approximately 7% of staff days were redirected from planned activities as a result of the support provided to the TWGs.[10] The total loss to STRIVE was, in fact, far greater insofar as the Team Leader was redirected to work with the TWGs, depriving the program of his professional inputs and requiring another STRIVE TA to backfill his position.

In addition to the above, 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.

Synchronized and Integrated Systems for Managing Schools (SISMS): One of the critical outputs of the STRIVE TA team has been the development of the SISMS which demonstrates and articulates the interrelationships of the systems developed by Regions 6, 7 and 8, supported by STRIVE, to ensure delivery of the core functions of the Department of Education which are key to its reform agenda. The SISMS describes the integration and synchronization of systems across DepED levels to effectively implement the critical functions and processes that are directed towards the improvement of educational outcomes.

Appendix 4 contains a graphic representation of the interrelationships and functionality of the different systems at school, Division and Region level. In order for this system to be fully tested a cycle of three years is required. The first three year cycle will conclude in May 2012. There is an extremely strong argument for extending STRIVE 2 to the end of this cycle in order to ensure that not only the systems introduced across the three component areas are properly bedded down, but also that the relationships between the systems is consolidated.

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

Direction of the STRIVE Initiative: The IPR Team was directed to consider whether or not STRIVE participation in the DepEd Executive Committee Meetings, coupled with participation in the BESRA Reviews constitutes an effective mechanism for direction of the STRIVE initiative.

The IPR Team found that the work of both the STRIVE Technical Advisory Team and the EDPITAF Project Management Team remains extremely focused on both the higher order initiative purpose and the component objectives by virtue of a strict adherence to both the letter and the spirit of the STRIVE Stage 2 design.

The broader, and more significant, management question, however, relates to the degree to which DepEd Central is able to:

(i) facilitate and support STRIVE's work, as the vanguard initiative for the roll-out of BESRA; and

(ii) capitalise on the achievements and the learnings of STRIVE in order to influence policy development and program considerations.

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[9] Personal communication: TWG Chair

[10] This figure was calculated by summing the staff days devoted to 'off Plan' activities and expressing this as a percentage of the total staff days allocated (and contracted) for implementation of the STRIVE Implementation Plan.

First, the IPR Team identified a number of areas where the structure/functions at DepEd Central Office appear to have inhibited STRIVE's operational effectiveness.

- The work on restructuring of the STRIVE regions was delayed by the failure to appoint an Organisational Development Advisor in a timely manner. STRIVE undertook substantial OD work to facilitate the restructuring; however, the approval of the pilot restructuring was, again, extensively delayed at DepEd Central.
- Where DepEd Central has been requested to provide various guidelines and standards to be utilized in system development, these have often been unavailable or inordinately delayed.
- The quality of performance of the TWGs is variable. Whereas some have a clear sense of direction and effective arrangements for working with STRIVE, others appear to be less effective, either not meeting or having difficulty maintaining consistent attendance from key members.
- Where significant gains have been made as a result of STRIVE interventions in increasing enrolments and reducing DOR, the delayed (and inadequate) provision of the MOOE has often made it difficult for the school to operate.[11]
- The delay of the development of the LRCs due to the delay in the approval of the adoption of the LRMDS Framework.

Second, the IPR Team found that there appears to have been a break-down in the intended relationship between the work of STRIVE in the development and testing of systems and the use of collected data and lessons learned to influence national level policy making /formulation and the BESRA 'roll-out'. So, for example:

- It is not clear to what extent the work being carried out by STRIVE in the development of purpose built, DepEd owned, systems such as the LRMDS, the BEIS and the UIS has been taken into account by DepEd Central in the development of the Enterprise Architecture for ICT.[12]
- While there are mechanisms in place to ensure that the TA support provided to DepED Central with SPHERE funds is totally integrated with, and builds upon, the vanguard work of STRIVE[13], the IPR Team doubts that these mechanisms are working effectively. Efforts need to be made to improve the operational effectiveness of these mechanisms in order to avoid waste and duplication of effort.

The IPR Team notes that the Joint BESRA Review conducted in February, 2009 referred in general terms to the need for DepEd's senior management to improve coherence, coordination and complementarity of actions and activity, through the agreed structures, including the BESRA Technical Coordinating Team, and BESRA TWGs. The BESRA review also called for adequate, efficient, effective and timely technical, financial, and moral support to the key implementing units.

It may be appropriate at this time for the Secretary of DepEd to remind the Executive Committee and the Technical Coordinating Team of the intended vanguard function of STRIVE and to review the mechanisms for feedback of collected data and lessons learned into national level policy formulation and decision making. The effectiveness of these mechanisms will be particularly important in ensuring that the pilot restructuring taking place in the STRIVE Regions informs the institutionalization of an improved Regional structure based upon the functions outlined in RA9155.

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[11] The IPR Team visited Nenita Elementary School which had an enrolment of 1021 students with 16 teachers and experienced significant delays in receipt of the MOOE.
[12] The Joint BESRA Mission conducted in February 2009 also highlighted this issue.
[13] These are: a) Engagement of the TCT International Education Adviser; and b) STRIVE's periodic meetings / work with the different BESRA TWGs.

It may also be appropriate for AusAID to discuss with Senior Management, DepEd whether or not the absence of a STRIVE Project Steering Committee has inhibited the process of regular, coherent and responsive policy making and decision making.

Human Resources: Virtually all DepEd staff involved in STRIVE commented to the IPR Team upon the strains placed upon them by having to fulfil their normal work duties, as well as STRIVE duties. This does not, of course, apply to the Chairs of the various STRIVE teams, whose positions are backfilled. Nevertheless, even these staff appeared to be attempting to cover their organic, as well as STRIVE, functions.

This pressure placed on staff can be better appreciated if one understands that the various STRIVE Teams at Region/Division level are made up of serving Principals and School Heads from the pilot schools. A review of the data (see Appendix 6) shows that almost 90% of the elementary schools participating in STRIVE have at least 211 students; almost 90% of the secondary schools have at least 141 students. The organic school personnel participating in the various STRIVE teams, therefore, already have substantial school responsibilities apart from their STRIVE work. Unfortunately, performance appraisals of the staff involved in STRIVE are relate to their organic functions, not their STRIVE functions. Clearly, this pressure will reduce as the restructuring takes effect, the systems are bedded down and there ceases to be a distinction between STRIVE and normal DepEd functions.

3. Efficiency

- ### *Cost Effectiveness*

Studies of the effectiveness of educational interventions are very common. Studies of their *cost-effectiveness* are rare. This is regrettable since this type of analysis facilitates the making of informed choices by national decision-makers among alternative program approaches in order to select the approach which promises to contribute the most to the country's educational goals.[14]

A detailed cost effectiveness analysis was not required as part of this IPR as the AusAID Education team at the Philippines Post intends to conduct a "resources review" of all AusAID education assistance to the Philippines in due course.

Nevertheless, the IPR team wishes to draw attention to the following issues which deserve to be the subject of more detailed research:

(i) While the STRIVE initiative has incurred comparable management costs to the more 'traditional' project approach adopted by BEAM, a recent IPR of BEAM would suggest that the sustainability of the 'traditional' project approach is likely to be significantly less than that for the systems approach being adopted by STRIVE[15]. Further study needs to be carried out on the sustainability of results achieved as a result of different approaches.

(ii) International evidence suggests correlations between SBM reforms and improved school access and coverage in rural areas and poor communities.[16] The STRIVE data would appear to confirm this correlation. Nevertheless, a detailed comparison of school access and coverage in STRIVE vis-a-vis non-STRIVE Regions would be required to produce data which could make a meaningful contribution to this debate.

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[14] CEA can take three basic approaches: (i) minimizing costs for a given level of effectiveness (a form of least-cost analysis); (ii) maximizing effectiveness for a given level of cost; and (iii) finding the best trade-off between costs and effectiveness.

[15] Philippines-Australia Development Cooperation Program BEAM Independent Progress Review Report 2 May – 8 May 2009

[16] Refer '*Impact Evaluation for School-Based Management Reform*' December 2007 Doing Impact Evaluation No. 10 World Bank Thematic Group on Poverty Analysis, Monitoring and Impact Evaluation

(iii) The international literature also suggests that SBM reduces dropout and repetition rates, although the magnitude of the effect varies across countries.[17] Again, the STRIVE data would appear to support this finding, but more detailed research is required.

- ***Costing and Budgeting***

It would appear that the design for project STRIVE under budgeted for travel expenses. The heavy demand for travel required to promote genuine, participatory approaches is often underestimated in project designs. This is a lesson which needs to be addressed by AusAID during Quality at Entry assessments.

Second, the role of the Cebu office as a hub for the three targeted regions was also underestimated and consequently under budgeted.

Finally, the costs associated with developing the LRMDS, the BEIS and UIS was significantly under budgeted. This was addressed to some degree by AusAID but the magnitude of the tasks which have been attempted, namely to develop systems from the ground up which are owned by DepEd, has not been fully appreciated.

- ***AusAID Management Systems***

A review of AusAID's management of the contract of the STRIVE initiative suggests 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. For example, the contractor was effectively left without a contract for more than six months, from the end of June 2007 until 14th January 2008, when the Stage 2 contract was signed.[18] During this period the contractor was carrying the costs of STRIVE but was unable to bill AusAID for reimbursement. Not surprisingly, there is a limit to the degree to which a private company may be expected to carry the cost of a GoA initiative. As a result, certain items of expenditure were slowed down or delayed until such time as the contract was signed (e.g there was a change in strategy where the number of participants in activities relating to the baseline studies and the introduction of "systems thinking" were reduced; also procurement of equipment for office establishment in the new sites was delayed).

Annual Plan 2008/2009 was submitted in two parts with the AP for quarter 1 submitted in April 2008 and the AP for quarters 2 – 4 submitted in October 2008. This was approved in November, 2008. Contract Amendment 3, facilitating implementation of the AP was not signed until 11th May, 2009. Moreover, a number of items[19] that were approved as part of the 2008/2009 Change Frame attached to the Annual Plan were not included in Contract Amendment 3 as the cost of these items exceeded the ceiling for increase in the contract amount which had previously been approved by the Delegate. These budget cuts clearly had operational implications. 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.

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[17] Ibid with specific reference to the work of Jimenez and Sawada (2003)

[18] The previous contract amendment only covered 3 months out of the 4 month Bridging Phase; the amendment therefore concluded at the end of June 2007. Stage 2 commenced on 1st August 2007; however, the contract amendment covering Stage 2 was not signed until 14th January 2008.

[19] The items affected were: (i) an approved increase in the reimbursable budget to allow for the procurement of additional items including computer equipment and an extra vehicle; and (ii) an approved increase in the time of International TA beyond the original 21 months included in the design.

- ***Management of Risk***

The Contractor has adequately maintained and updated the Risk Management Matrix for STRIVE Stage 2. A number of high level risks identified require dialogue and advocacy between AusAID and DepEd. These include:

- o Delay in accessing SPHERE funds for the LRCs.
- o Current behavior patterns, showing resistance to change, of some DepED personnel and stakeholders not conducive to requirements of BESRA.
- o Policy guidance on BESRA implementation is absent, weak or confusing

The Risk Management Matrix also identifies "Insufficient time to fully support the restructuring initiatives" as a high level risk. The IPR Team agrees with this assessment which is a strong argument for extension of STRIVE Stage 2.

4. Impact

The IPR Team was instructed to consider the short term impact of STRIVE against the indicators identified in the AusAID Philippines Country Strategy Performance Assessment Framework (PAF). Appendix 5 identifies the relevant PAF objectives, intermediate outcomes/milestones, success indicators and the STRIVE contribution.[20]

- ***PAF Objective 2.1***

The aim of this PAF objective is: "DepEd better able to manage its resources to support schools and teachers". The intermediate outcomes/milestones listed in the PAF against objective 2.1 are 'process' outcomes (e.g. Unified Management Information System developed). As discussed under Section 2. Effectiveness, STRIVE has met/exceeded the process outcomes targeted in the PAF.

The PAF also includes a set of 'success indicators' against objective 2.1. Some indicators are quantitative, relating to the numbers of modules, trainers, manuals ready for replication and the number of national standards and policies in place. In this regard the short term impact of STRIVE includes the development of:

- o the SBM Primers that the BESRA SBM TWG is currently rolling-out[21]
- o tools and instruments for the BESRA School Improvement Plan (SIP) Manual
- o the SIP Facilitator's Guide currently being used by the NEAP
- o the School Assessment of SBM Practices guide, rolled-out by the SBM TWG
- o the SBM Assessment System (instruments and mechanics for analysis of, and technical assistance to, the division level) which comes with an SBM Assessment Framework.

Success indicators against objective 2.1 also include qualitative indicators, requiring assessments of the capacity of targeted Divisions and Regions, as well as the capability of the offices to roll-out and replicate STRIVE systems. The elements which contribute to sustainable capacity development are discussed in greater detail under section 5. Sustainability (see below). In the absence of detailed institutional assessments (which the IPR team was not tasked to undertake) we can simply state that we observed considerable engagement and commitment amongst personnel in the STRIVE schools, Divisions and Region visited. The IPR Team also observed some capacity to carry out the functions and tasks required by the new systems; however, this capacity varied across components, Regions and Divisions.

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[20] The table contained in Appendix 5 has been prepared for this IPR Report by aligning the STRIVE Initiative Design with the Philippines Country PAF Matrix FY09-010.
[21] See 'A Primer on School Based Management' Basic Education Reform Agenda, Department of Education, January 2009.

Overall, the IPR Team formed the strong impression that the targeted Regions, Divisions and schools would benefit from extended STRIVE support to deepen and embed the capacity development which has already occurred.

- ***PAF Objective 2.2***

The aim of this PAF objective is "Improved education opportunities for boys and girls, including Muslim and indigenous groups, in targeted areas to access quality education". The intermediate outcomes listed against this objective include both 'process' and 'product' outcomes (e.g. **"**By 2009: Participation rate of 6-11 year old … increased by 20%) [22]

The IPR Team regards the 'product' outcomes identified in the PAF as extremely ambitious. However, the success indicators simply seek to establish STRIVE's *contribution* to the achievement of these outcomes via the presentation of examples of follow-on effective utilization of the systems and processes introduced by STRIVE. Evidence of effective utilization has already been discussed under PAF Objective 2.1

As regards evidence of changed education programs and learning outcomes, analysis carried out as part of this IPR (see Appendix 6) indicates that while completion rates of public school elementary students improved slightly at the National level between 2006/07 and 2007/08 [+1.97%], the STRIVE regions experienced higher positive changes: Region VI [+2.92%]; Region VII [+2.56%] and Region VIII [+8.8%]. The same positive change was not observed in relation to the secondary schools. However, it should be noted that almost 80% of the STRIVE participating schools are elementary schools.

More detailed analysis is required of the short term impact of STRIVE on Drop Out Rate (DOR), failure rate and achievement vis-a-vis the national average.

What is not adequately explored in the Philippines Country PAF Matrix – and deserves to be – is the hypothesis that the legislative and policy shift to School Based Management may have little or no impact on learning outcomes unless backed up by the type of capacity building, capacity utilization and change in work 'culture' which is being facilitated by STRIVE.

5. Sustainability

From AusAID's perspective, sustainability is concerned with determining whether or not, and to what extent, the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. Sustainability is closely linked to analysis and learning insofar as the latter involves consideration of the major factors which have influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of a program.[23]

Sustainability requires a range of elements of capacity to be present. This is well expressed by a recent study on Capacity, Change and Performance produced by the European Centre for Development Policy Management[24] which identifies five core capabilities which need to be present if an organisation or system is to sustain itself.

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[22] Philippines Country Strategy Performance Assessment Framework Matrix FY09-010.
[23] AusAID is guided in this definition of sustainability by the OECD Development Assistance Committee Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance.
[24] 'Capacity, Change and Performance' Study Report by Heather Baser, Peter Morgan & Ors. Discussion Paper No. 59B April 2008 European Centre for Development Policy Management. Thanks to Nelson Ireland, the previous Team Leader for the STRIVE TA team, for referring this highly relevant paper to the IPR Team.

These are the capabilities:

- (i) to commit and engage,
- (ii) to carry out functions or tasks,
- (iii) to relate and attract resources and support,
- (iv) to adapt and self-renew (i.e. to improve individual and organizational learning; to foster internal dialogue; to reposition and restructure the organization; if required; to incorporate new ideas and to map out a growth path)
- (v) to balance coherence and diversity (i.e. to admit of new ideas and perspectives without losing focus and fragmenting).

- ***Commitment / engagement and capacity to carry out functions***

The IPR Team found clear evidence of the capability: (i) to commit and engage and (ii) to implement the new systems developed with the support of STRIVE. DepEd staff and community stakeholders across all Regions and components expressed confidence that the knowledge and skills which they have gained as a result of participation in STRIVE initiatives, the changed work culture (particularly in respect of the involvement of a broad range of local stakeholders) and the use of the standards, systems and tools will continue, even if STRIVE does not continue. As one DepEd staff member put it "There is no turning back".

STRIVE schools demonstrated a far greater understanding of the value and function of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) than non-STRIVE schools, seeing it as a way of not only analyzing their problems and identifying solutions, but also as a basis for networking to gain access to resources to improve their school. The non-STRIVE schools visited by the IPR team lacked this vision, as well as the motivation and skills to develop the SIP in any meaningful way.

However, as indicated in section 2. Effectiveness, above, the IPR Team found that the capacity to carry out functions and tasks is variable across Regions and components. Genuine sustainability will require deepening and embedding of the practices currently being employed.

- ***Capacity to relate and attract resources and support***

In respect of criterion (iii) STRIVE's approach has involved developing the capacity for resource mobilization at school, division and region level. Schools have been taught resource mobilization techniques under SBM; each element of the SIP must be costed and options identified for resource mobilization. The IPR Team visited a number of schools where the school communities had clearly grasped the idea of mobilizing all additional resources (outside the school MOOE) in order to implement their School Improvement Plans.

STRIVE work is still in progress in the divisions/regions on introduction of the Education Governance and Participatory Mechanism (EGPM) which identifies and standardizes participatory mechanisms for education governance, including mechanisms for improving resources for education. These approaches enable these units to engage stakeholders in generating additional resources to address their needs identified in the Division Education Development Plan (DEDP) and Region Education Development Plan (REDP).

The designs of both T&D and LRMD systems have also been developed on the basis that they will be demand driven and provide some services on a fee-paying basis.

DepEd appears to be making progress in budgeting for the recurrent costs of STRIVE systems themselves.

For example:

- o DepEd Central has assigned staff to the T&D and LRMDS Centres.
- o Central Office, supported by STRIVE, is computing the recurrent costs of the LRMDS centres in order to embed these into the over-all budget.
- o In the February 2009 Executive Committee Meeting with the Assistant Secretary, DepEd, the Regional Directors (RDs) and Schools Division Superintendents (SDSs) verbally committed to absorb the costs of the STRIVE systems in their regular budgets. The first evidence of this will be seen in the next budget schedule (October/November 2009).
- o Finally, in respect of the Community Learning Centres**,** a tripartite agreement had been signed in the (Divisions) among DepED, LGU and TESDA re: roles and involvement in the operation and management of the CLCs. This agreement includes resource support for CLC operations.

Despite these positive developments within DepEd, the IPR Team has some concerns that Central Office may not have the capacity to quickly and efficiently respond and release funds, if and when a broader range of schools begin to produce meaningful SIPs and seek to draw down resources, and TA support from the Divisions, to implement those plans. For this to occur, there may need to be a change in the structure, function and culture at the central level similar to that which is occurring in the STRIVE Regions.

- • *Capacity to adapt and renew*

The IPR Team also saw evidence of (iv) the capacity to adapt and self renew (e.g. via organisational restructuring and the development of research instruments). In the Regions visited DepEd staff has already gone beyond the designated Divisions and pilot schools to provide training and support in the new systems and approaches to a broader range of Divisions and schools.[25]

However, these core capabilities are, as yet, uneven in their strength across the Regions and component areas. Further, the development of these capabilities exists side by side with very real threats to sustainability; for example, the Rationalization Action Plan which will facilitate restructuring of all Regions to facilitate the roll-out of BESRA is still pending approval at the DepEd Central Office.

The IPR Team has serious concerns as to the degree to which organizational learning, and consequent action, is taking place at Central level as a result of the work being carried out in the STRIVE Regions. If clear decisions are not made by DepEd Central, particularly in the area of restructuring of the Regions, this has the potential to undermine the BESRA reforms.

- • *Capacity to balance diversity and coherence*

This is a capacity which requires the careful management of different capabilities, interests and identities within an organization in order to gain the benefits from diversity, whilst still maintaining coherence and focus. Given that DepEd is currently undergoing a dynamic process of reform the emphasis is, quite rightly, upon the need to develop coherent structures and systems to facilitate that reform. The approaches being adopted within STRIVE will, ideally, facilitate innovation and diverse contributions within the context of known systems and directions. However, it is far too early to assess the degree to which the full potential of these systems will be expressed in the target Regions and beyond.

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[25] For example, in Region 6 training has been provided for 140 school heads, rather than just the School Heads of the 100 pilot schools. Training in the TDNA tools have been done in all schools, not just the pilot schools. They have also been providing assistance to other regions.

- *Post Election Sustainability*

Finally, the IPR Team considered the sustainability of the systems introduced by STRIVE Stage 2 in light of the upcoming national elections. As indicated earlier, both the LRMDS and the T&D Systems are already being rolled out by DepEd beyond the STRIVE target regions and divisions and appear to have considerable immediate, practical appeal and traction. The IPR Team is therefore of the view that these systems are likely to be sustained in some form, even under a new administration.

The SBM approach has had a long history, commencing with the Schools First Initiative, and is likely to remain as a policy focus.   However, if the SBM TWG is not able, in a post election environment, to continue to support Regions and Divisions to develop and use the SBM support systems, the policy goal will not be realized and the achievements of STRIVE in this area will not be sustained.

As mentioned earlier, the IPR Team is of the view that restructuring of the DepEd Regions is an essential precursor to the effective implementation of the BESRA reform agenda. If the restructuring were not to be institutionalized nationwide, many of the STRIVE system achievements would not be able to be sustained. Hence, there is a need for high level advocacy on this issue by AusAID.

6. Gender Equality

Appendix 6 to this report contains a full description of the gender analysis conducted in relation to STRIVE Stage 2 as part of this IPR

- *Identification and addressing of gender equality issues*

STRIVE has fulfilled its formal requirements in relation to the Harmonized Gender Guidelines. Nevertheless, the IPR team observed that there has, so far, been a greater focus on a 'supply side' approach to gender, emphasizing organization, project management, processes and teachers, and less on the 'demand side', that is, identifying the gender-related issues affecting learners. Greater attention could be given, for example, to building teachers' and stakeholders' capacity to do gender analysis at school level as part of SIP preparation.

To date, STRIVE's Gender Strategy is less a strategy and more a definition of concepts that the project intends to apply, as well as a recapitulation of the approach that was outlined in the Project Design Document and the Supplementary Paper. Practically speaking, therefore, STRIVE is only just beginning to consciously identify and address gender issues. While there are gender elements or indicators in the NCBTS and LRMDS tools, the component managers and members are barely aware of these. Similarly, while STRIVE collects sex-disaggregated data (BEIS indicators and participation in project activities), there is little evidence that this data has been analysed and used to design interventions that could improve the gender situation.

- *Monitoring and reporting on gender equality issues*

The Team Leader is responsible for ensuring that gender equality/equity and other crosscutting themes are promoted and addressed in STRIVE; gender is not included in the TORs of the other technical advisors, although the M&E Specialist covers 'social and gender concerns' when monitoring sustainability factors. Knowledge about GAD among the TAs seemed to be limited to disaggregation of (numerical) data by sex, with two TAs consciously linking this information to planning. However, there is an appreciation of GAD criteria/strands in NCBTS and LR.

There is no gender expertise among the TAs, so the project has tapped (one) resource person for GAD to conduct a gender workshop in June 2009 which has led to a number of plans to enhance gender integration in the project.

Efforts to include "gender" in progress reports began in the first quarter of 2008 by discussing two sets of sex-disaggregated data: (1) indicative enrolment figures, and (2) participation in implementation activities.[26]   The report did not include any analysis of the data, however, such as the identification of location-specific differences in enrolment (and possibly, dropout) patterns?   The draft M&E report attached to the 2010/11 Annual Plan also includes sex-disaggregated data but, again, with little analysis.

From various interviews, meetings and conversations in the field so far, the following is noted:

- o At the Central level the EDPITAF Executive Director and one or two TWG chairs) are undertaking gender analysis of the dropout rate data which has made DepEd pay particular attention to boys. 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.
- o STRIVE intends to document gender integration in the various components;   however, aside from sex-disaggregated data on participation of stakeholders in project activities, there has been no effort to highlight the contributions of women and men stakeholders and of gender issues that get discussed or addressed in the various components.

- • **Adequately supporting DepEd gender mainstreaming efforts**

Appendix 6 outlines the activities being undertaken by DepEd to move 'beyond GAD activities' to mainstreaming gender in DepEd operations. STRIVE support for this effort has been as follows:

- o **SBM component:** STRIVE has been generating some sex-disaggregated data as part of SIP preparation and in connection with the SOBEF. Further, participants in a STRIVE gender workshop held in June 2009 identified a number of actions to improve gender integration in the component. However, it should be noted that the STRIVE design is focused on enhancing systems in the division and region level rather than school. STRIVE can only directly support school management in improved gender mainstreaming within the context of SOBE and CLASS initiatives.

- o **T&D Component**: STRIVE 2 developed the NCBTS TNA tool, and has enhanced the NCBTS by providing KSA (Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes) sub-indicators for the GAD-related strand/indicator (among others).[27] However, it appears that teachers rarely identify GAD as an area for professional development. This could be partly due to the way the queries are framed, or to the lack of appreciation of the way in which gender issues can help teachers to manage/support girls and boys in their care.

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[26] "STRIVE Stage 2: Progress Report 2007/2008, as reflected in the Annual Plan 2008/2009," page 5.

[27] According the TA, the Training and Development Needs Assessment for School Heads (TDNASH) has identified sexual harassment as a specific issue under the management of conflict training of school heads.

STRIVE TA has achieved proportional representation of women in training and has promoted the production and distribution of non-sexist, gender-fair training materials. The Gender Workshop in June 2009 produced a range of plans which revolve around gender equity in participation and classification of TDNA results, or needs of women and men. However, the action plan does not include a guideline for incorporation of core GAD messages into training sessions, regardless of topic, particularly those that pertain to ways in which teachers can better respond to the different needs, aptitudes, and circumstances of girl and boy learners.

o **LRMD:** While GAD criteria are incorporated into the LRMDS manual, the level of awareness as to what these GAD criteria are, and how they are applied, vary widely among DepEd staff interviewed.   Moreover, the approach to GAD, as mentioned above, is a 'supply side' approach, emphasizing organization, project management, processes and teachers.   The choice of the GAD core messages in the LRMs should be dictated by issues that concern learners as well as teachers/school heads and education leaders.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

- ***Project STRIVE M&E Framework***

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 Regional and Division M&E Groups (made up of organic DepEd staff from the target regions) engage in regular data collection in week six of each quarter, focusing on progress in the achievement of physical outputs, per component; technical and operational risks/issues;   lessons learned and sustainability measures being undertaken. This information is analysed and presented in simple graph form to the Regional Monitoring, Evaluation & Adjustment Meeting (MEA).

The data collection and analysis being carried out at Regional and Division levels is quite simple at this stage which has enabled the systems to be readily adopted and understood by DepEd staff at these levels. In time, there may be scope to develop the sophistication of these systems. As it stands, the system remains consistent with the method for computing physical progress as prescribed by DepED through the OPS-PDED. The approach adopted has, therefore, focused upon strengthening the DepEd system rather than introducing additional systems or processes.

The most critical innovation being practiced by STRIVE, from a capacity building perspective, is the quarterly MEA reviews which track issues, sustainability measures implemented and lessons learned. The IPR Team observed that the regular conduct of the Regional MEA and the Joint MEA (component and project wide) is clearly assisting DepEd staff to focus on regular collection and analysis of data, study of technical and operational risks/issues, lessons learned, and sustainability measures. As one Regional staff member observed "The MEAs give us the opportunity to redirect inputs and adjust plans."   Clearly the MEAs have added an element of dynamism and energy to the work in the regions/divisions which may previously have been lacking.

The Joint MEA is also the venue which highlights specific issues beyond regional control which require action by higher management. These are addressed at the ExCom Meeting held immediately after the Joint MEA.

The Regional M&E Group (RMEG), the Division M&E Group (DMEG), the PME EDPITAF counterpart and TA all consolidate the results of the MEA process as a basis for reporting to DepEd, AusAID, the STRIVE Management Committee and GOP oversight agencies.

- ***DepEd M&E Systems***

STRIVE has made a major contribution in developing ICT enabled information management systems, across all components, which are consistent with national systems. Appendix 7 presents a graphic representation of the Unified Information System developed by STRIVE which places the STRIVE M&E systems within the context of the broader DepEd M&E Systems.

STRIVE has also assisted DepEd to enhance the Basic Education Information System (BEIS) which aims to provide relevant and timely information to support the critical processes in education management at the division, region and central office levels. The design is intended to meet the following specific objectives:

- To streamline and efficiently render the collection and processing of education data from the schools and field offices;
- To institutionalize Quality Assurance and M&E processes at every level of the education management system and
- To support information requirements of school-based management, planning and policy formulation at all levels.

There would appear to be a great deal of interest in the work being done by STRIVE on BEIS enhancement, and DepEd Central is open and receptive to improving and refining existing systems.

STRIVE has also designed the School Management Information System.   The schools which are ICT enabled will be able to link directly to the BEIS and upload their raw data. The Division role will therefore shift from an information collection and processing function to an analysis and evaluation function. This will have significant implications for the way in which the Divisions work.

STRIVE is in the process of developing the system design/mechanism for the Regional Education Development Plan which will be based upon the data being fed up from the schools, through the Divisions. As the Regions develop their capacity to manage and analyse data, they will be able to make significant contributions to policy development at central level, as well as monitoring for quality assurance and to validate the appropriateness of existing policy directions.

21.   Analysis and Learning

The IPR Team was informed that STRIVE is a test case for the way in which AusAID might approach other aspects of its work in the Philippines; the team was requested to test assumptions underlying STRIVE for broader relevance.

The design of STRIVE Stage 2 was built upon a continuous pattern of learning, commencing with the 1999 Program on Basic Education (PROBE), moving on to the solid institutional contributions made by the 2001 Basic Education Assistance in Mindanao (BEAM) project and eventually to STRIVE 1. The relative coherence of the key components of the different projects and programs facilitated attempts to systematize "Analysis and Learning" in STRIVE Stage 2.

Further, analysis and learning is inherent in all of the processes and systems introduced by STRIVE, characterized by the quarterly Monitoring and Evaluation Adjustments carried out at Division, Region and meta-Region levels.

This positive approach to analysis and learning within STRIVE is counterbalanced, however, by the existing structures and mechanisms within DepEd Central which hamper attempts to systematize analysis and learning.[28]

In light of the upcoming national elections it will be critical to document all of the processes and achievements which have occurred in STRIVE 2 and for this information to be provided to a Core Group within DepEd who will champion the continued application of the systems and approaches which have been tested.

The key lessons from the implementation of STRIVE Stage 2 include:

- *The focus on systems development and innovation* to support the implementation of the BESRA reforms has clearly hastened and facilitated some components of the reform agenda. However, the vanguard efforts of STRIVE appear to have become 'de-linked' from AusAID's broader education sector reform efforts (e.g. SPHERE) and the World Bank NPSBE loan. AusAID needs to discuss with DepEd and the World Bank ways to improve the mechanisms for take-up of lessons learned from STRIVE's work.
- *Full consultation, acceptance and integration with DepEd priorities and decision-making* has ensured ownership of, and responsibility for, the STRIVE systems within EDPITAF and the Region/Division offices. However, the sense of ownership and responsibility for outcomes would appear to be less strong in DepEd Bureaus and within some of the TWGs.
- *The use of annual rolling plans and budgets* to ensure flexibility and variability appears to have achieved the desired result insofar as it has facilitated a responsiveness within the STRIVE initiative which is not only greatly appreciated within DepEd, but also has allowed STRIVE to develop strong relationships with some key TWGs. However, contracting and approval processes at AusAID HQ do not appear to facilitate the smooth and uninterrupted implementation of agreed forms of development assistance.
- *Targeting interventions towards areas of educational disadvantage* through a focus on access and equity has not only had a positive impact on learning outcomes in those areas, but has also demonstrated what can be achieved, even in the most difficult circumstances.
- *Adopting innovative models of delivery*, including use of ICT, ADMs and ALS. The work being done by STRIVE on the LRMDS, the enhancement of the BEIS and the UIS is greatly appreciated within DepEd and has the potential to revolutionize work in the education sector in the Philippines. By contrast, DepEd staff in the STRIVE teams appeared to be somewhat confused about the uses of ADMs and ALSs.
- *Utilizing "champions"* at the school, division, regional and national levels has proved to be extremely effective; however, care must be taken not to overburden staff without commensurate recognition of their contribution.

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[28] For a discussion of the inhibiting effect of DepEd structures and systems, see "Corruption and Implementation: Case Studies in Philippine Public Administration" by Vicente Chua Reyes, Jr. National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippine and Philippine Australia Human Resource Development Facility 2009

Evaluation Criteria Ratings

Evaluation Criteria	Rating (1-6)	Explanation
Relevance	6	The initiative is highly relevant in terms of need, as well as GOP and GoA policies and the Philippines Country Strategy.
Effectiveness	5	The initiative is on track to achieve its objectives; the flexible approach to design and implementation has been effective. DepEd staff are developing the capacity to implement the systems introduced by STRIVE, although with varying degrees of effectiveness across Regions. However, DepEd Central appears to have had difficulty in facilitating and supporting STRIVE's work, as the vanguard initiative for the roll-out of BESRA. DepEd Central has not, as yet, fully capitalised upon the achievements and the learnings of STRIVE in order to influence policy development and program considerations.
Efficiency	4	No cost effectiveness analysis was conducted. The initiative appears to have made effective use of time and resources to achieve outcomes. AusAID contracting and approval processes appear to have inhibited the smooth and uninterrupted implementation of agreed forms of development assistance
Sustainability	4	DepEd staff working on STRIVE clearly demonstrate commitment/ engagement and the capacity to implement the new systems, although the latter capacity varies considerably across regions and components. A number of systems are already being rolled out beyond the STRIVE regions. DepEd appears to be making progress in budgeting for the recurrent costs of STRIVE systems and Regions/Divisions/Schools are learning mechanisms for broader resource mobilization. Nevertheless, there are very real threats to sustainability. The Rationalization Action Plan (which will facilitate restructuring of all Regions to facilitate the roll-out of BESRA) is still pending approval at the DepEd Central Office. The IPR Team has serious concerns as to the degree to which organizational learning is taking place at Central level.
Gender Equality	4	Using the Harmonized GAD Guidelines for project management and implementation (box 16) and monitoring and evaluation (box 17), implementation of STRIVE 2 has been rated as "gender sensitive" (8.59), which is an improvement from the previous year (6.08).
Monitoring & Evaluation	5	The M&E system effectively measures progress towards meeting its objectives; the system is a dynamic system which is adjusted to take account of changes; M&E teams at Region and Division level have actively 'built' the system with STRIVE support and the system is integrated within DepEd M&E systems.
Analysis & Learning	4	The design of STRIVE Stage 2 built upon a continuous pattern of learning. Analysis and learning is inherent in all of the processes and systems introduced by STRIVE. However, the existing structures and mechanisms within DepEd Central hamper attempts to systematize analysis and learning throughout the department.

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

Conclusion and Recommendations

STRIVE Stage 2 is a highly relevant initiative which is on track to achieve its objectives. DepEd personnel in the target Regions, Divisions and Schools have made a promising start in implementing systems in SBM, HR-INSET and LRMD with the support of STRIVE; nevertheless, there is considerable variability in capacity. The target Regions, Divisions and schools would clearly benefit from extended STRIVE support to deepen and embed the capacity development which has already occurred.

There is, therefore, a strong case for extension of the term of STRIVE 2 to facilitate a deepening and consolidation of the work currently being carried out in the three Target regions to develop, implement, monitor and refine SBM, HR-INSET and LRMDS systems. This extension is justified on the grounds of:

- The loss of momentum and time occasioned by the redirection of STRIVE resources to support the TWGs and the restructuring of the regions.
- The need to complete a full QAA cycle of three years in order to fully test the interrelationships and functionality of the different systems.
- The need to facilitate greater 'take-up' at central level of the national policy and programming implications of the work of STRIVE, with support from SPHERE and NPSBE.

There is no argument for an expansion of the activities of STRIVE to other Regions and Divisions; in fact, quite to the contrary. It was always intended that any further roll-out of systems developed by STRIVE would be the responsibility of DepEd. DepEd is, in fact, already rolling out various aspects of the systems without help from STRIVE. If STRIVE were to engage in any further geographic expansion it would be effectively returning to a project mode and stepping into DepEd's role.

Further, the argument for an extension of STRIVE 2 is equally an argument for *not* expanding the scope of the initiative. The systems development completed to date needs to be deepened and consolidated. A geographic expansion would threaten this process and, therefore, potentially undermine the quality of the systems and, consequently, their capacity to be rolled-out on a national basis.

However, there is scope for augmenting the functions of STRIVE 2 in the area of policy advice. It is clear that across all components data is being produced and lessons are being learned which have implications for national level policy making and strategic planning. However, the implications of STRIVE's work are not necessarily being taken up at the national level. At present, none of the STRIVE Technical Advisors have skills in contributing to the policy formulation process; nor do they have the time to address this function. STRIVE's effectiveness in contributing to and informing the policy formulation process may be significantly enhanced by the inclusion of a Policy Analyst within the technical assistance team. This position could then represent a Policy Focal Point to facilitate more effective linkages with SPHERE and NPSBE in supporting DepEd's roll-out of BESRA.

Finally, there may be scope for AusAID to develop a facility, as part of an extended STRIVE, which could provide 'direct funding' to Regions and Divisions which demonstrate genuine commitment in acquiring the core capacities required to sustain both the organisation and the new systems.[29] The current STRIVE M&E system could be enhanced to identify a set of indicators to measure progress on a capacity development 'continuum'. This system could be used both to determine the amounts of funding which could be provided to different Regions/Divisions, as well as to measure progress on the 'continuum'.

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[29] Refer to the discussion under section 5. Sustainability on the five core capacities for sustaining organizations and systems.

Recommendations

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

1. AusAID explore the feasibility of extending STRIVE Stage 2 until the end of one full quality assurance cycle, namely May 2012.

2. Consideration be given to including the position of a Policy Analyst in the technical assistance team for the 'extended' STRIVE Stage 2.

3. AusAID explore the feasibility of developing a facility, as part of an extended STRIVE Stage 2, which could provide 'direct funding' to Regions and Divisions which demonstrate genuine commitment in acquiring the core capacities required to sustain both the organisation and the new systems.

4. AusAID engage in dialogue with Senior Management, and other relevant groups within DepEd, on ways to improve the mechanisms for utilization of the collected data and lessons learned from STRIVE's work to inform national level policy making and decision making, including the possibility of reconvening a Project Steering Committee.

5. Consideration be given to including a position of Gender and Education Specialist in an 'extended' STRIVE Stage 2 to focus on organizational development, teachers' development, learner needs and situations, and M&E and reporting requirements.

Consequent upon review of the final draft of this report, it is understood that DepEd is in full agreement with the above recommendations.