EQuALLS2

Life of Project Report
12-30-2011

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

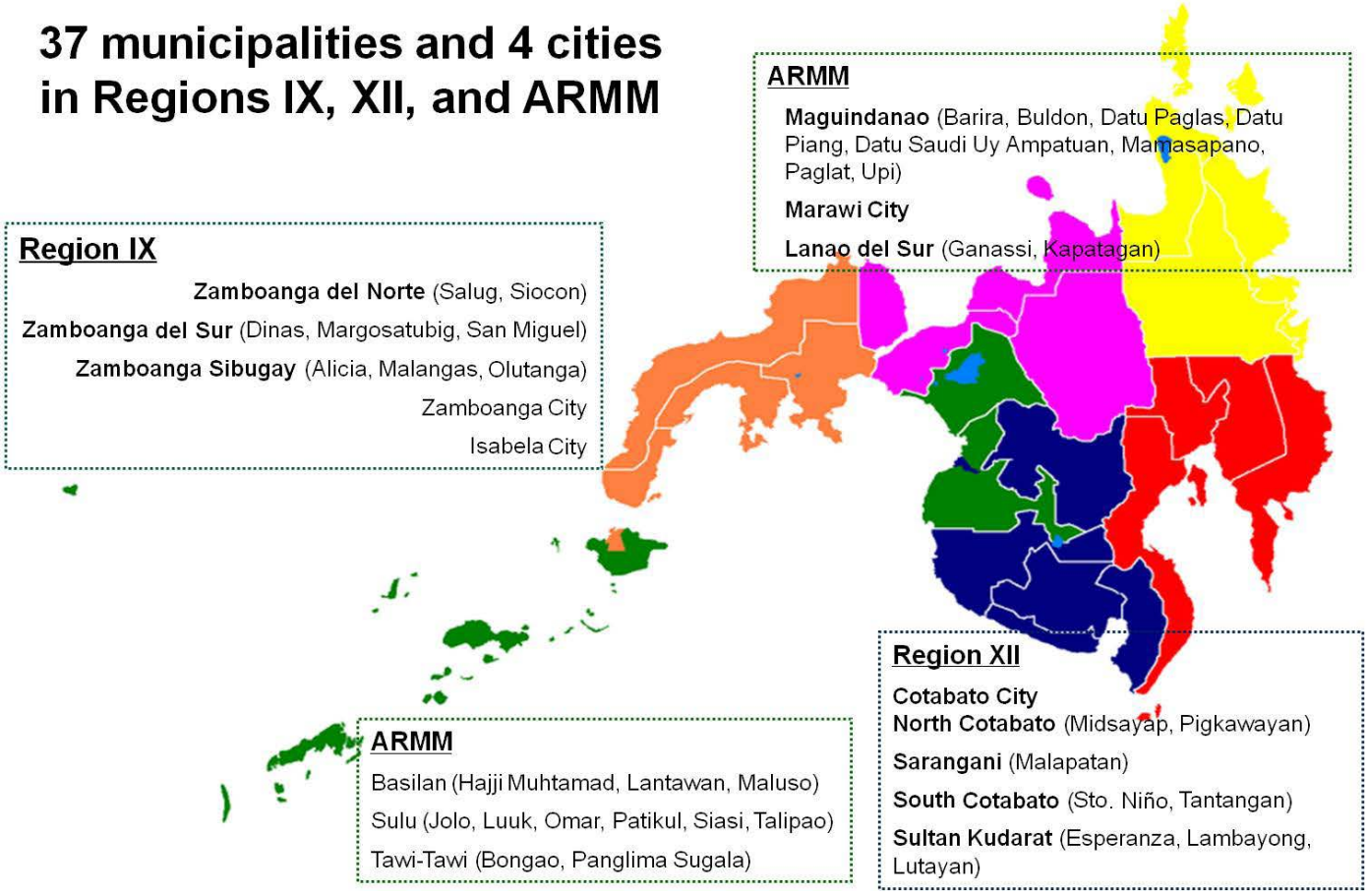
DepED DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

TESDA

EQuALLS2 PROJECT EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCESS FOR LEARNING AND LIVELIHOOD SKILLS PROJECT

Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao | Region IX | Region XII

EQuALLS2 Project Sites



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We thank you for the tremendous contributions that you have made towards improving access to quality learning and livelihood opportunities for children and young people in high-poverty, conflict affected areas in Mindanao, Philippines.

U.S. Government Agencies:

- USAID
- U.S. Peace Corps (USPC)
- Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) of the U.S. military

Lead Implementing Partners:

- Save the Children
- Synergeia Foundation
- International Youth Foundation / Education Livelihood Skills Alliance (ELSA)
    - Ayala Foundation
    - Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP)
    - Petron Foundation
        - Notre Dame of Marbel University – NDMU
    - Consuelo Foundation
        - Champagnat Community College – Notre Dame Marbel University (CCC-NDMU)
        - Nagdilaab Foundation
        - Mahardika Institute of Technology, Inc.
        - Notre Dame of Midsayap College
        - Notre Dame University of Cotabato City

Government Counterparts:

- Department of Education (DepED)
    - DepED Region 9, 12, and DepED Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)
    - DepED Bureau of Alternative Learning Systems (BALS)
    - DepED Bureau of Elementary Education (BEE)
- Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)
- Municipal and Barangay Local Government Units (LGUs)

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- Brothers Brother Foundation
- Microsoft Foundation
- National Book Store Foundation
- Petron Foundation

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- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Other Grantees and Service Providers:

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- U.P. National Institute for Science and Mathematics Education
- DepED National Education Testing and Research Center (NETRC)
- Center for Educational Measurement (CEM)
- Real World Productions
- Champagnat Community College – Notre Dame of Marbel University (CCC-NDMU)
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- Ateneo de Zamboanga
- Notre Dame University-affiliated colleges
- I.T. Works
- Business Profiles, Inc.
- Diliman Network Solutions
- i4 Asia Incorporated
- Service Providers for Scholarship Program
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    - Golden State College
    - Green Valley College Foundation, Inc.
    - Holy Trinity College
    - i-Link College of Science and Technology
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    - Marbel-Gensan Technology, Inc.
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    - Notre Dame of Tacurong College
    - Notre Dame of Midsayap College
    - Notre Dame University
    - Notre Dame-RVM College of Cotabato
    - Nuevo Zamboanga College, Inc.
    - Pilar College
    - Ramon Magsaysay Memorial College
    - Regency Polytechnic College
    - Regional Manpower Development Center

- SITE and Driving Schools, Inc.
- Southern Christian College
- Southern City Colleges, Inc.
- Southern Mindanao Institute of Technology
- St. Columbian College
- Sultan Kudarat State University
- Sulu State College
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Abbreviations

ABL	Assessment for Basic Literacy
ALS	Alternative Learning Systems
A&E	Accreditation and Equivalency
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BALS	Bureau of Alternative Learning Systems
BBF	Brother's Brother Foundation
BE	Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao
BEE	Bureau of Elementary Education
BL	Basic Literacy
BLP	Basic Literacy Program
BERC	Barangay Education Report Card
BESRA	Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda
BLiS	Basic Literacy and Life Skills
BME	Bureau of Madrasah Education
CA	Coordinating Agency
CEM	Center of Educational Measurement
CESP	Community Education and Skills Plan
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CIG	Community Incentive Grant
CLC	Community Learning Center
CLCMC	Community Learning Center Management Committee
COC	Certificate of Competency
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DAP	Developmental Assets Profile
DAP T1	Developmental Assets Profile Time One
DAP T2	Developmental Assets Profile Time Two

Abbreviations (continued)

DepED	Department of Education
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
EDC	Education Development Center
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EiE	Education in Emergencies
ELC	English Language Camp
ELF	Education for Life Foundation
ELSA	Education and Livelihood Skills Alliance
EPDP	Educators' Professional Development Program
EQuALLS2	Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills Phase 2
EQUIP3	Encouraging Qualities Underdeveloped in People
FLT	Functional Literacy Test
GDA	Global Development Alliance
HQ	EDC Headquarters
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICT4E	Information and Communications Technology for Education
IM	Instructional Manager
IMPDT	Instructional Manager's Professional Development Tracking
IR	Intermediate Result
IYF	International Youth Foundation
KFR	Kidnapping for Ransom
JSOTF	U.S. Military Joint Special Operations Task Force
LAR	Livelihood Activity Report
LF	Learning Facilitator

Abbreviations (continued)

LGU	Local Government Unit
LIP	Lead Implementing Partner
LPP	Learning Partnership Program
LSB	Local School Board
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MICNet	Mindanao Industry Coordinators Network Inc.
MESP	Municipal Education and Skills Plan
MESDC	Municipal Education and Skills Development Council
MIS	Management Information System
MLE	Multilingual Education
M/BTWG	Municipal and Barangay Technical Working Groups
NAT	National Achievement Test
NC	National Certificate
NCBTS	National Competency Based Teacher Standards
NCII	National Competency Level II accreditation
NDFCAI-WED	Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities, Inc.- Women in Enterprise Development
NDMU-CCC	Notre Dame of Marbel University - Champagnat Community College
NEDA	National Economic and Development Authority
NEPP	National English Proficiency Program
NETRC	National Education Testing and Research Center
ORFA	Oral Reading Fluency Assessment
O&C	Outreach and Communications
ODPM	Organizational Development and Project Management
OSCY	Out-of-School Children and Youth
PEPT	Philippine Education Placement Test

Abbreviations (continued)

PBSP	Philippine Business for Social Progress
PGS	DepED's Performance Governance System
PMT	Project Management Team
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTO	Permit to Operate
PTCA	Parent Teacher Community Association
QPR	Quarterly Progress Report
RBEC	Revised Basic Education Curriculum
RFA	Request for Applications
RPO	Regional Program Officer
RR	Retention Rate
SBM	School-Based Management
SC/Save	Save the Children
SCOPE	Standards-based Classroom Observation Protocol
SEAMEO-INNOTECH	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization – Center for Educational Innovation and Technology
SEC	Securities and Exchange Commission
SP	Scholarship Program
SRI	Scholastic Reading Inventory
STAR	Situation-Tasks-Action-Result
TA	Technical Assistance
TEI	Teacher Education Institute
TEPT	Test of English Proficiency of Teachers
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
TOT	Training of Trainers

Abbreviations (continued)

TWG	Technical Working Group
UBMPDI-USM	United Bangsamoro Movement for Peace and Development, Inc.-University of Southern Mindanao
UP-NISMED	University of the Philippines - National Institute for Science and Math Education Development
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USPC	United States Peace Corps
VAT	Value-Added Tax
WFD	Workforce Development
WSRP	Whole School Reading Program

Executive Summary

The Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), and its public and private institutional partners have successfully completed implementation of the originally planned five-year USAID/EQUIP3 **Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills Project Phase 2 (EQuALLS2)**. This program has provided increased access to quality basic education and skills training programs for close to a half million children and youth in almost 1,000 communities in the Philippines, most of which were affected by conflict and poverty.

In December 2011, EDC was granted a no-cost extension to continue EQuALL2 educator professional development programming through June 2013. The no-cost extension will be an opportunity for EDC to build on the gains and lessons learned to date, to further strengthen teachers' English language skills and students' capacity to read at their grade level.

This report will focus on EQuALLS2 project accomplishments through December 2011. The no-cost extension report will be submitted shortly after the close of the project in June 2013.

EDC, and its *lead implementing partners*—**International Youth Foundation, Save The Children, and Synergeia Foundation**—worked closely with the Philippines Department of Education (DepED), the Department of Education in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DepED ARMM), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), local school boards, PTAs, and mayors and community leaders to strengthen formal and non-formal basic education and livelihood skills training for youth ages 6–15 and 12–24 respectively.

Highlights of the project's accomplishments across the three result areas included the following:

- **Result Area #1: Increased access to learning opportunities through community support to education in targeted geographic areas:**
    - **Assessment-based capacity building for Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and local school boards (LSBs)**, enabling them to play a stronger role in supporting education improvement.
    - Effective management of **Community Incentive Grants**

(**CIGs**) that included impressive mobilization of financial and in-kind contributions from community members and local government offices.

- Introduction to the Barangay **Education Report Card** (BERC) system, which enabled PTAs and LSBs to track education indicators and use related **data for decision-making**, enhance education improvement planning, focus on quality learning improvements, and, share related progress with community members.

- **Education in Emergencies (EiE) programming** included education and disaster planning, peace building, and conflict resolution, aimed at helping communities prepare continuity of education plans during times of conflict, disaster, and emergency.

- Improved access to education through **classroom construction and refurbishment** in some of the hardest-to-reach and conflict-affected communities.

- **Assistance to Madaris to become accredited K–6 learning facilities** through adoption of the DepED Standard Madrasah Curriculum. The curriculum incorporates standard basic education subjects into Islamic studies to give Muslim students equitable access to quality, culturally sensitive, basic education.

❖ **Result Area #2: Strengthened capacity for teaching English, math, and science:**

- Delivered the **Learning Partnership Program, an integrated, school-based approach for the professional development** of educators based on training English, science, and math learning facilitators who in turn provided coaching, mentoring, and in-school workshops for fellow teachers.

- **Improved teacher content mastery in English, science, and math** to address baseline assessments that showed teacher content mastery in these subjects to be just a grade level or two above their students.

- **Strengthened reading comprehension and oral fluency skills of teachers through the Whole School Reading Program (WSRP)** in selected schools that provided group and one-on-one training for core subject teachers on oral flu-

ency and comprehension. Students reading skills were also improved by interventions based on their reading weaknesses assessed using the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tool in selected schools.

- **Organized book fairs for teachers** to "shop" for donated books that were **responsive to teacher's classroom needs and relevant to their students' skills level**. Teachers received assistance during trainings on ways to integrate these materials into their regular lesson plans.

- Provided **opportunities for teachers to access and use technology** to enhance their teaching practice with computer-assisted lesson plans, teaching and learning visual aids, and electronic grading sheets.

❖ **Result Area #3: Improved relevance of basic education and livelihood skills training for out-of-school youth:**

- Provided **community-based Alternative Learning Systems Basic Education (BE) offerings** to out-of-school youth (OSY) in remote communities with no education infrastructure and to conflict-affected communities where government teachers and skills trainers were traditionally unwilling to work.
    - **Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) courses** provided OSY the opportunity to earn an elementary or high school equivalency certificate, granted by DepED through the A&E national test.
    - **Basic Literacy programs** created opportunities for completers to enroll in higher level basic education and skills training courses.
    - **Philippine Education Placement Test (PEPT)** courses determined the grade level to which learners could return within the formal school system.

- Provided OSY with a variety of **Workforce Development (WFD) training** courses with **diverse content areas** (ranging from welding, electrical wiring, and small engine repair to fish processing, baking, and agriculture, among others), which responded to local realities and market demand by providing youth with a wide range of options, including:
    - Community-based/In-center training and on-the-job training
    - Course offerings that ranged between two and four months in duration

- Provided **post-training support for graduates of non-formal education and technical skills training**, enabling them to identify and access local opportunities in employment, self-employment, and continuing education.

- Tracked the **application of new and improved knowledge and skills** via innovative monitoring and evaluation tools, such as the Developmental Assets Profile (DAP) and the Livelihood Activity Report (LAR).

EQuALLS2 met or exceeded all of the expected quantitative targets related to access, quality, and relevance, across 41 municipalities/cities, 1,158 barangays, and 845 schools. Highlight achievements are shown in the table below.

Indicators	Targets	Accomplishments	% Accomplished
Result Area #1: Increased access to learning opportunities for children and youth through community support for education in targeted geographic areas			
Learners enrolled in primary schools or non-school settings	310,000	**465,574**	150%
Parent Teacher Associations or similar "school" governance structures supported	850	**1,344**	158%
Classrooms and community learning centers constructed or repaired	1,700	**2,006**	118%
Result Area #2: Strengthened capacity for teaching English, math and science			
Teachers/educators trained	35,000	**38,490**	110%
Textbooks and other learning materials provided	1,800,000	**2,116,701**	118%
Result Area #3: Improved relevance of basic education and livelihood skills training for out-of-school youth			
Out-of-school youth participating in workforce development programs	35,000	**43,960**	126%
Out-of-school youth enrolled in basic education programs	70,000	**71,198**	102%
Out-of-school youth learners receiving scholarships	750	**758**	101%

Going beyond the numbers reached, EQUALLS2 was designed to address ***Depth, Reach, Quality,*** and ***Sustainability***. The measure of the project's success is the extent to which promising project interventions are institutionalized—based on ownership from government, non-government, and private sector partners—and brought to scale through sustained efforts by partner agencies and communities. Sharing the challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations related to EQuALLS2 achievements of programmatic depth, quality, and sustainability is the basis for this Life of Project Report.

CIG-funded playground

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Once one of the best in all of Asia, the education system of the Philippines has deteriorated significantly in recent years, in terms of both quality and access. The fundamental causes of this decline are slow economic growth, inadequate government revenues, and rapid population growth. These problems are particularly acute in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao, the traditional homeland of Muslim Filipinos, located at the southern end of the Philippine archipelago.

Decades-long confrontations between Muslim separatists and the Philippine government have killed more than 120,000 people and displaced more than 2 million people.[1] The conflict has led to widespread poverty in war-torn areas, especially in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which is the country's poorest region, where the average annual income was $2,025 in 2006, less than one third that of Manila.[2]

These factors have contributed to poor-quality teacher training, a shortage of teachers, overcrowded and under-equipped classrooms, high drop-out rates, and insufficient access to education for the poor, especially in ARMM. The Education for All (EFA) Mid-Decade Assessment reported that the lowest performing regions in terms of net enrollment and completion rates are in high-poverty, conflict-affected areas in Mindanao. Among these are EQuALLS2 project sites in Regions 9 and 12, and ARMM.

Many schools in these regions are severely underfunded, and most lack basic infrastructures such as adequate classrooms, clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, electricity, and classroom furniture. Schools also lack basic teaching and learning materials, including textbooks, work-

1 The Mindanao Conflict in the Philippines: Roots, Costs and Potential Peace Dividend, February 2005, page 5.

2 From National Statistical Board Coordination's 2006 report on Average Annual Family Income and Expenditures http://www.nscb.gov.ph/fies/fies-2006/2006fiesav1.asp

books, science and math kits, blackboards, and basic student supplies. Access to computers and modern audiovisual equipment to aid teaching is practically nonexistent. There is also a shortage of qualified teachers, particularly in rural areas, and the majority are poorly trained and lack the capacity to provide quality education to effectively prepare young people for higher education or skilled jobs.

Approximately 21% of the barangays[3] in the ARMM do not have schools, and, because of a major shortage of teachers, student-teacher ratios in the ARMM are approximately 80–100 to 1. Although 93% of the school-age population enrolls in grade 1, 60% of the students drop out before they complete elementary school. These factors, along with the conflict and the lack of job-creating investments in the ARMM, have contributed to the high unemployment rate in the region. More boys drop out than girls, and there is widespread concern that in the absence of employment, criminal elements and secessionist groups may recruit youth.

U.S. Government Assistance for Education Improvement in Mindanao

In 2004, President G. W. Bush signed an agreement with his counterpart in the Philippines and initiated a new program of U.S. bilateral assistance targeted to Muslim areas of Mindanao. This agreement was the basis for the USAID-funded EQuALLS1 program (2004–2006), which consisted of several local and international organizations receiving 1–2 year grants, to deliver a diverse range of basic education and livelihood support options for children and youth.

EQuALLS1 partners brought experience, local knowledge of Mindanao, and innovative education improvement activities; however, organizational constraints led to a somewhat scattered program delivery that resulted in different degrees of focus on a selected target group. Although EQuALLS1 partners implemented interesting and innovative approaches in different communities in ARMM and regions 9 and 12, their combined efforts fell short of the intermediate results identified by USAID.

USAID Philippines Mandate for EQuALLS2 Project

With the second phase of EQuALLS (EQuALLS2), USAID sought to bring programmatic coherence; an increased depth and quality of education assistance to conflict and poverty-affected areas of Mindanao; and, management integration to EQuALLS programming. In July

3 Barangay is the term for the smallest unit of local government.

2006, the EQuALLS2 Cooperative Agreement was awarded to EDC, through EQUIP3, to serve as the Coordinating Agency (CA) and to provide overall technical direction for the five-year program.

EDC was tasked with finalizing the Phase 1 program activities and, in partnership with the USAID Education Team, with designing and leading the implementation of innovative education and youth work in targeted conflict-affected communities in Mindanao. This involved designing a request for applications (RFAs) and awarding grants to local and international organizations that would work under the technical leadership and coordination of EDC. EDC awarded four-year grants to International Youth Foundation, Save the Children, and Synergeia Foundation to serve as *Lead Implementing Partners* throughout the project.

Implementing Education and Youth Development Work within the fragile context in Mindanao

Increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015 is the third goal (of a total three goals) in USAID's new Education Strategy 2011–2015. The challenge of providing increased access to millions of learners is underscored by the fact that over 70 million primary school-aged children are not in school and nearly 40 million live in countries affected by armed conflict. Enabling increased access to education in areas of conflict (such as Mindanao) is critically important, because education is not only a human right, but it can also mitigate the effects of fragility and conflict. It is therefore critical to restore education venues, services, and system capacity for children and youth. [4]

While conflict and poverty mitigation was not an explicit objective of the EQuALLS2 project, meaning that EDC was not responsible to track indicators and show results related to conflict alleviation, USAID focused on education and livelihood work in Mindanao as a direct response to the higher concentrations of poverty levels and conflict.

Within the context of the Mindanao conflict, EQuALLS2 worked with the Philippine Department of Education (DepED), DepED ARMM, and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to implement programs that provided safe and productive options for children and youth—helping them either to attend a quality public school or Madrasah—to achieve a high school equivalency certificate, or to gain a livelihood skill that could lead to expanded income pathways.

4 USAID Education Strategy, February 2011, pp.13–14

EDC implemented a number of key managerial and programmatic measures to mitigate conflict barriers to project implementation. Over the course of the project, EDC and the lead implementing partners accomplished the following:

- Ensured swift programmatic flexibility, including the Education in Emergencies activities, modifying training schedules, and providing training in relatively safer neighboring communities;
- Developed education and youth programs to respond to the demand to the social development (education and youth programming) needs expressed by local government officials and community members;
- Engaged stakeholders (government officials at every level, community members) to increase support at the local level through close working relationships, creating a sense of confidence and mutual support as well as a vested interest and a feeling of co-ownership during the implementation of project activities;
- Enabled local field staff to manage all field level operations based on an in-depth understanding of the local environment and an ability to build trust and confidence with their fellow countrymen;
- Conducted security training and planning, developed a project-level and contextualized security plan; and maintained clear security protocols and regular security updates for field staff working within the conflict environment.

The project's ability to successfully implement education and youth development programs during some of the most challenging years of insecurity and conflict in Mindanao was based to a large extent on building social capital with community members and Mindanao government officials as an integral part of building the government's capacity to deliver improved education services.

Former Secretacy of Education Jesli Lapus and Former U.S. Ambassador Kristie Kenney signing the bilateral assistance agreement for education programs between DepEd and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

A main success factor in the overall EQuALLS2 management and implementation approach was forging effective strategic partnerships with host government agencies, local and international public and private organizations, and other donors.

Substantial involvement from **key host country government agencies**, such as the Department of Education, DepED ARMM, the Technical

Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the various city and municipal governments in project sites, was critical to ensuring that project objectives and approaches were aligned with and supported by national policy.

EQuALLS also worked through **academic and research institutions**, such as the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO-INNOTECH); the University of the Philippines (UP) National Institute for Science and Mathematics Education Development; Mindanao-based academic institutions such as Ateneo de Zamboanga; and various Notre Dame University-affiliated colleges. These partnerships served to tap available local expertise, build local capacity, and provide mechanisms for post-project sustainability.

Equally important was the sense of shared responsibility that the project fostered among local and international businesses and private sector partners to address the serious education issues in conflict areas of Mindanao. EQuALLS2 embraced the **USAID Global Development Assistance (GDA) model** that aims to develop public-private partnerships to leverage a 1:1 U.S. dollar (USD) match for every dollar spent by USAID.

EQuALLS2's private sector partners generously contributed educational services and resources to the following areas of education improvement across targeted communities in Mindanao:

- **$35.7 million dollar partnership with Brothers Brother Foundation** (BBF) provided approximately 2 million high-quality textbooks, readers, audio books, and teaching aids to elementary school teachers and students.

- **$2.5 million dollar partnership with Petron Foundation** (Petron Corporation Philippines, oil and gas provider) provided classroom construction and repair.

- **$400,000 dollar partnership with National Book Store Foundation** (Manila) provided 48,000 dictionaries to elementary school classrooms.

- **$60,000 dollar partnership with Microsoft Corporation** provided introductory computer training for 1,402 elementary school teachers.

Under the EQuALLS2 Project, USAID and Petron Foundation have repaired 480 classrooms and built 108 classrooms, each with chairs, tables, blackboards, cabinets, electric fans, a toilet, and electrical and water facilities.

All 845 EQuALLS2-assisted schools have supplementary books from Brothers Brother Foundation, and dictionaries from USAID and the National Book Store Foundation, while 286 schools have teachers trained in computer use by Microsoft Foundation, all with the goal of improving teaching and learning.

MANAGEMENT

As the **EQUALLS2 Coordinating Agency**, EDC was responsible for overall project leadership and management. This included providing technical program guidance and management support for a sub-grant portfolio totaling more than $30 million. EDC guided the development of annual work plans and budgets of sub-grant partners with a series of annual technical guidance notes, aligned with the evolution of project strategies and activities. EDC monitored the technical and financial performance of all lead partners and developed and managed the project's communication and outreach system and strategic partnership development efforts. EDC also developed and managed the EQuALLS2 monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, which included a Learning Agenda that provided opportunities to introduce innovations in response to project implementation challenges.

Datu Paglas teachers at the Basic ICT training conducted by Microsoft trainers

The first year of the EQuALLS2 project was designated by USAID as a transition year, during which USAID asked EDC to issue sub-grants to several organizations to complete and evaluate the implementation cycles for ongoing EQuALLS1 program activities. During the second year of the project, EDC issued a Request for Applications (RFAs) to solicit eligible organizations wishing to serve as lead implementing partners during the next four years. EDC awarded grants to International Youth Foundation, Save the Children, and Synergeia Foundation, and supported all three organizations through the following **Technical Leadership and Quality Assurance** functions:

- **Technical Leadership:** Provided technical guidelines and standards (through technical notes, partner workshops, technical working group meetings); monitored targets and schedules; and ensured quality of program outcomes, agreed upon project-wide approaches, and annual work plans

- **Financial/Grants Management:** Conducted pre-award due diligence checks of sub-grantees, ensured compliance with budget management and financial management standards, approved annual budgets, ensured compliance with sub-grant agreements, and conducted field visits and provided related capacity building and support

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Managed a multi-level (main office-field office, partner-EDC-USAID) database management system to ensure the effective tracking of progress and outcomes; promoted the use of data for decision-making; documenting and disseminating lessons learned; and provided quarterly progress reports to USAID

- **Outreach and Communications:** Managed internal and external communications, ensured a *one face-one voice* project presentation (consistent project-wide messaging) with the general public and stakeholders, submitted agreed-upon communication product deliverables to USAID, and complied with marketing and branding guidelines

A main thrust of the quality assurance process was a commitment from EDC technical and financial staff to provide hands-on guidance and oversight through regularly held Technical Working Groups (TWGs), M&E, and Communications meetings; joint review and feedback sessions around sub-grantees' quarterly progress report; facilitation of joint Annual Planning activities with sub-grantees; monthly field visits; and periodic participation of EDC staff in sub-grantees' activities.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

EDC worked with USAID and its implementing partners to develop an EQuALLS2 M&E system aimed at going beyond simply counting numerical project outputs to addressing five sets of questions, each with a different purpose and each forming one strand of the overall Strategic Framework for Monitoring and Evaluation:

1. How is EQuALLS2 contributing to USAID's strategic global education initiatives?
   Purpose: Strategic USAID Accountability

2. What are the common outputs and outcomes of EQuALLS2 program interventions? How can the effectiveness of EQuALLS2 be understood by key audiences within USAID, DepED, and by key stakeholders at the national and local level in the Philippines?
   Purpose: EQuALLS2 Program Accountability

3. Are community partners and key local, regional, and national government decision-makers acquiring the outcomes-oriented evidence and cost-benefit information that will inform decisions about the types of program interventions for in-school and out-of-school youth that they are willing and able to sustain and/or scale up?
   Purpose: Sustainability and Scalability by Local Stakeholders

4. What questions need to be answered to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of new and existing EQuALLS2 implementation and M&E activities?
   Purpose: EQuALLS2 Documentation and Learning for Program Improvement

5. What other kinds of data do partner organizations want or need to track?
   Purpose: Partner-Specific Data Tracking

EQuALLS2 developed an annual documentation and research agenda for improved delivery of evidence-based education and livelihood development programs. This agenda promoted an iterative process for asking key questions and developing and documenting new approaches to answering the questions and introducing innovative tools and strategies for improved program implementation.

EQuALLS2's Learning Agenda

Learning/Research Topics	Questions for EQuALLS2	Resulting Products Developed
Common **community organizational capacity assessments** for: 1. Community institutional capacity building 2. Student achievement tracking	• How can EQuALLS2 best build the capacity of community organizations to be active partners in educational improvement? • How can communities gather, access, and use data in their efforts to improve the quality of learning for in-school and out-of-school youth?	✓ PTA and LSB Capacity Assessment Tool ✓ BERC Handbook ✓ BERC Learning Series ✓ PTA Manuals (Save the Children)
Youth development tracking tools	• How can EQuALLS2 track and report positive youth development participation in EQuALLS2 education and livelihood programs?	✓ DAP Handbooks ✓ LAR Toolkit (includes LAR Report and Learning Series)

Learning/Research Topics	Questions for EQuALLS2	Resulting Products Developed
Professional development and capacity building for educators	• How can EQuALLS2 coordinate with DepED and other donor initiatives to improve the English reading, writing, and speaking abilities of educators? Learners?	✓ Whole School Reading Program (WSRP) modules and WSRP Learning Series ✓ LPP Manual and Learning Series ✓ English, science, and math modules ✓ Training Manual for Instructional Practices (includes SCOPE Tools and Learning Series)
Technology and materials	• How can EQuALLS2 effectively integrate educational technology and materials inputs into the daily teaching and learning practices in partner schools and learning centers?	✓ Learning Series on Supplementary Books Delivery Program ✓ Learning Series on ICT Program ('Myths and Realities' of ICT Program for Education)
Public-private alliances	• How can USAID's GDA strategy for private sector investment be used to full effectiveness in Mindanao?	✓ Learning Series on "Developing Effective Public-Private Partnerships for Education Improvement in Mindanao"
Grants system	• How can the EQuALLS2 grants system be managed in a way that supports the program's approach to developing capacity at all levels?	✓ Grants management plan and manual (processes, tools and guidelines for users)

EDC facilitated a series of dissemination events to share results, accomplishments, and lessons learned from project implementation. These events were designed to provide a platform for DepED, local government units (LGUs), and other local participants to share and dialogue on how to ensure that promising education improvement initiatives can be sustained in high-poverty, conflict-affected areas in Mindanao.

USAID conducted a **systematic mid-term review** (April 20–30, 2009) to ensure that a long-term project such as EQuALLS2 was on track and to recommended mid-term adjustments to strengthen continuing

programming. The USAID Office of Education in collaboration with USAID Procurement, Financial Services, and the Program Resources Management teams organized the mid-term review. The review affirmed that EQuALLS2 was addressing critical education needs, adapting and responding to emerging issues and making progress towards achieving USAID development goals. The review also highlighted the quality of programming and the competencies and commitment of project staff and implementers.

Recommendations and USAID guidance from the mid-term review led EQuALLS2 to introduce enhancements in its core program interventions, such as covering whole schools and all barangays; implementing the madrasah assistance program; incorporating new strategies for teacher professional development; and expanding options for OSY, with more elements toward work-readiness, scholarships, and post-training support. A final evaluation will be conducted by USAID within the coming months.

OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS

Due to the high profile nature of EQuALLS2—as the U.S. Government's cornerstone assistance effort for education improvement in conflict-affected Mindanao—the project was fortunate to have an outreach and communication unit. EQuALLS2 used a comprehensive set of outreach and communications (O&C) strategies to provide up-to-date progress on the project's diverse set of education and youth livelihoods activities taking place on a daily basis in Mindanao.

The project's O&C efforts were particularly successful due to the involvement and backing of the U.S. ambassador, USAID director, Philippines education secretary, and visiting U.S. diplomats, including Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Regular support from these high-level figures greatly assisted the project's ability to build strong relationships and engage with national, regional, and local government officials and education stakeholders to effectively project successes and concerns.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton graced an EQuALLS2 organized book fair in November, 2009

In order to address and reach a large Philippine population and a global development arena, the project used the following kinds of messaging approaches:

- Regular newspaper articles in the national and local press
- Periodic television programming
- Regular weekly highlight submissions to USAID
- High-quality (and award-winning) program photos
- USAID and EQuALLS2 branding at project-supported activities

- Interactive website and resource portal
- Project newsletters
- National and regional dissemination events to share products and successful approaches developed and tested by the project
- Donor and stakeholder reporting

With a project of the size and complexity of EQuALLS2, involving important relationships with multi-tiered government and private sector partners, EDC worked to develop a "One Face and One Voice" communication strategy to ensure common communication of project objectives and accomplishments by the many project implementers.

INTRODUCTION

EQuALLS2 Program Framework

To inform the design parameters of the EQuALLS2 Project, in 2006, USAID Philippines reshaped its education intervention for Mindanao to focus not only on increased access but on the quality and relevance of that education as well. During the same period, the Philippines Department of Education (DepED) embarked on the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA). BESRA placed strong emphasis on the importance of promoting school-based management as well as continuing professional development of educators.[5]

Low capacities of institutions and governance structures in the geographic areas to be served by EQuALLS2 challenged the implementation of DepED initiatives. Governance structures such as PTAs and LSBs needed to be strengthened to participate in school-based management, and educators to be served by the EQuALLS2 project lagged behind teachers in other regions in the amount and quality of continuing education and support available to them.

This lack of "opportunity to learn" has put teachers, particularly in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), at a disadvantage. Testing conducted during the first phase of EQuALLS (2004–2006), for example, showed that teachers' own content knowledge in English, math, and science was weak, with average scores on content assessments equivalent to just a grade level or two above their students. A substantial number of out-of-school youth benefited from Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) programs under EQuALLS Phase 1, but widespread poverty created a growing demand for more flexible workforce development and livelihood skills programs that responded to the needs of young people for employment.

EQuALLS2 set out to implement a coordinated set of interrelated interventions to improve access to quality formal and non-formal basic education and livelihood opportunities for youth, ages 6–15 and 12–24 respectively, in targeted municipalities in the ARMM, Region 9 and Region 12. The primary goal of EQuALLS2 was to assist in the achievement of USAID Philippines *Strategic Objective 11: Increased access to quality education and livelihood skills in selected areas, particularly those most affected by conflict and poverty.*

5 Described in DepED's National Competency-based Teachers' Standards embedded in the framework of Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda

Program Components and Implementation Mechanisms

Specifically, EQuALLS2 focused on the achievement of USAID's three targeted program **Intermediate Results (IRs)**:

- **IR1:** Increased learning opportunities for children and youth through community support to education in targeted geographic areas
- **IR2:** Strengthened capacity for teaching English, math, and science (ESM)
- **IR3:** Improved relevance of education and training for out-of-school children and Youth (OSCY)

EDC established mechanisms for joint planning, monitoring of field activities, and for communicating technical guidance and regular feedback to its lead-implementing partners: IYF, Save the Children, and Synergeia.

- **Technical Working Groups (TWGs)** were established for each of the three result areas, composed of EDC program specialists and partner focal persons who worked closely together throughout the project to develop a common understanding of technical guidelines (issued in the form of Technical Guidance Notes) that articulated the elements for EQuALLS2-wide core program interventions.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) System and Documentation and Learning Agenda** was developed to inform project design based on data-driven decision-making; to introduce innovations for improved program delivery; and, to communicate progress toward targets, results, and overall outcomes.

- **Quarterly Progress Report Meetings** were conducted. EDC program and finance staff met one-on-one with each lead implementing partner each quarter to track progress, address implementation concerns, recognize accomplishments, and provide guidance on continuing work.

The implementation approaches were guided by the following principles, developed at the outset of the project in 2006.

Guiding Implementation Principles

- Implement an **outcomes-based program framework** that is focused on building the capacity of formal and non-formal educators and institutions, providing children and youth with more flexible opportunities for learning, creating classroom environments that facilitate learning, and advocating for national and regional education and training policies for sustainability.

- **Consolidate and scale-up selected EQuALLS efforts** that were effectively piloted and that demonstrated promising results during Phase 1 of the EQuALLS program.

- Emphasize **program convergence and deepening** so that targeted geographic areas receive a full complement of program interventions.

- Invest in **capacity building of local organizations** to benefit from their inputs into the design of project activities and to strengthen their ability to contribute to, manage, and sustain basic education programs.

- **Develop a consolidated monitoring and evaluation** (M&E) **system** able to *go beyond the numbers* to measure outcomes and impact, use data for decision-making, and document and share learning at different levels and for varied audiences.

Presented in the following sections are the main implementation strategies; activities; performance indicators and outcomes; and challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations for each result area.

RESULTS SECTION

INTERMEDIATE RESULT 1 (IR1):

Increased access to learning opportunities for children and youth through community support for education in targeted geographic areas

Approach

To improve access to quality education in formal schools and in non-formal education and livelihood programs, the EQuALLS2 program design used a combination of the following main approaches:

- Deepening and expanding selected prior interventions
- Developing strong community engagement and support for education improvement
- Constructing or refurbishing classrooms and learning centers to support teaching and learning

Access Strategy #1 Deepening was defined as systematic and coordinated program interventions to be delivered in concentrated geographic settings to maximize program impact on teaching and learning. EQuALLS Phase 1 was marked by support for a diverse range of basic education and livelihood support options for children and youth, spread across a wide geographic scope that included 155 municipalities/cities and 1,089 barangays.[6] In contrast, EQuALLS2 delivered comprehensive education programming within a limited geographic scope of 41 municipalities/cities and 1,158 barangays, which allowed for deeper, higher quality interventions with fewer schools and communities. It also allowed for more contact with local DepED, Local School Boards (LSBs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) for the kind of local capacity building needed to strengthen community support to education.

Access Strategy #2 Institutional Capacity Building for Local School Boards and Parent Teacher Associations was intended to increase community support for improved access to and quality of education.

The project framework for the development of strong community engagement and support was focused on enabling strengthened community institutions to be a logical entry point through which the project's

6 The wide geographic scope and field implementation by eight different USAID contractors made coordination and complementation of efforts under EQuALLS Phase 1 especially challenging. This led to a shift in USAID's guiding implementation parameters: a focus on fewer geographic sites with technical leadership and coordination to be provided by one institution (EDC).

diverse array of interventions would be introduced at the local level (Figure 1).

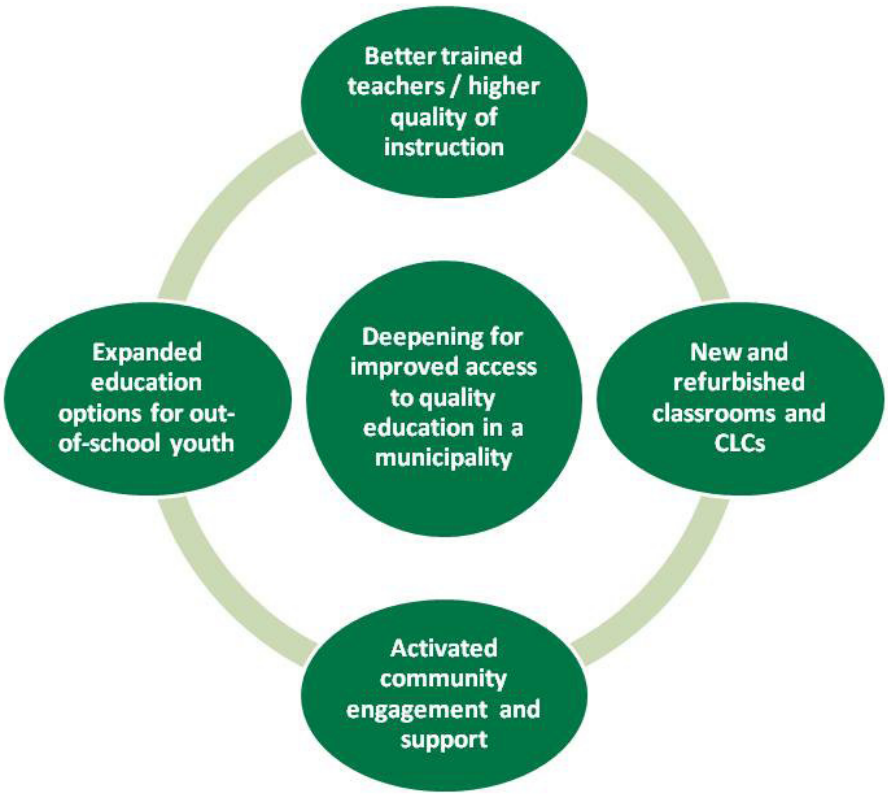


Figure 1. Activated institutions serve as entry points for delivery of education interventions

Initiating project activities through community-based organizations was meant to develop a holistic project perspective among community stakeholders; whereby, project interventions across result areas would be understood by community members as an integrated set of access and quality improvement interventions that were designed to serve the community's elementary school children and out-of-school youth.

With sustainability in mind from the beginning, the foundational EQuALLS2 access strategy was designed to build local capacity of community-based institutions to advocate for education improvement support from LGUs, DepED, and other government agencies. As part of this, in 2010, the Philippine Department of Education issued several policies[7] that recognized madrasah education and mandated its inclusion in the BESRA implementation plan. These policies bridged a pathway for madrasah education within the formal Philippine educa-

7 DepED Order No. 51 s. 2004; DepED Order No. 81 s. 2007; DepED Order No. 18 s. 2008

tion system, and provided Muslim school children with access to quality education that is both culturally and socially appropriate. Based on a survey of madrasahs in EQuALLS2 areas,[8] 21 private madrasahs were selected and were included as one of the community-based institutions that will also serve as an entry point for capacity-building and other project interventions.

The EQuALLS2 capacity-building strategy aligned with DepED's Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda 2006–2010 (BESRA), which prioritized enabling school-based management. Through BESRA, DepED expressed a commitment to providing opportunities for increased participation of PTAs in school-based management and the decision-making process for school improvement activities.

However, evidence showed that most PTAs did not fully function as intended due to weak organizational capacity. EQuALLS2 capacity assessments of PTAs confirmed that most PTAs were not fully aware of their mandated roles and responsibilities, lacked adequate governance and management skills, were not able to prepare annual PTA plans and mobilize needed resources, and needed more transparent and efficient budgeting and financial management systems (Figure 2).

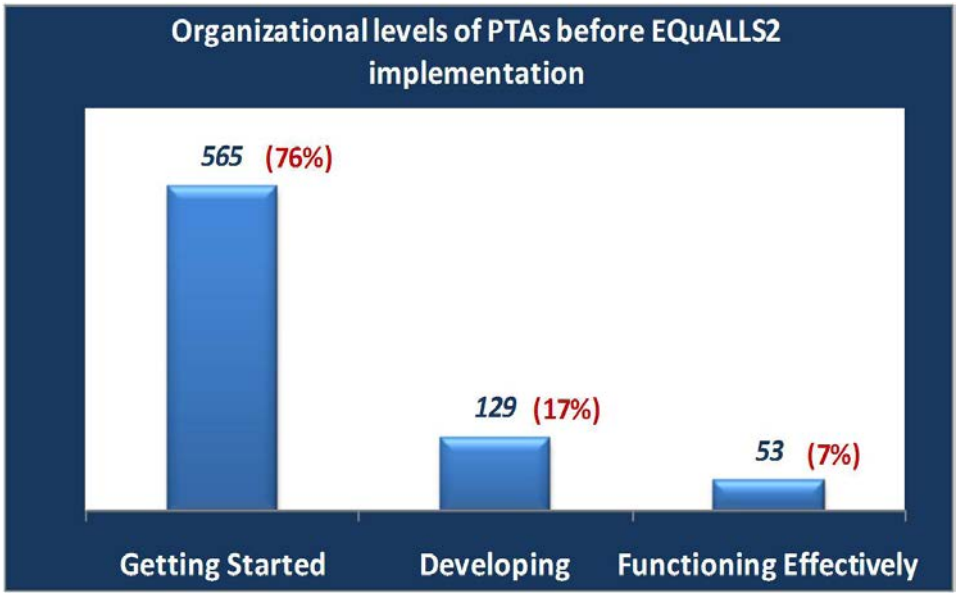


Figure 2: PTA capacity assessment baseline results

Similarly, parents of children attending the madrasahs covered by the project were not organized into any kind of education support group and were contributing only minimally for the maintenance of the

8 Survey of Madaris in Selected Municipalities in the ARMM. EDC Report. June 2008.

facility. Governance and financial management skills of madrasah administrators also needed to be strengthened.

Local municipal LSBs were also not functioning well. EQuALLS2 assessments showed that many LSBs did not meet regularly and had weak planning, budgeting, and reporting systems. The use of Special Education Funds (SEF) allocation was usually decided by only a few members, and the LSB budget was used primarily for regular infrastructure and sports events, and non-academic activities that did not directly contribute to quality education and learning (Figure 3).

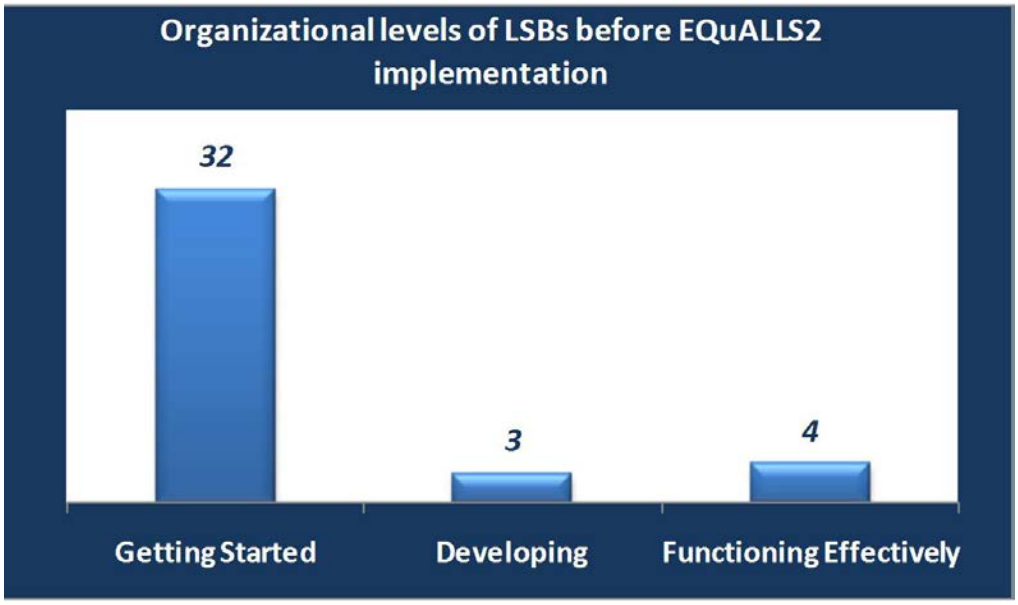


Figure 3: LSB capacity assessment baseline results

Access Strategy #3 Construction and Refurbishment of Classrooms and Learning Centers was to be carried out through expanded private sector partnerships, with community support. EDC commissioned a study to identify barriers to access of education in Mindanao; the study reported a classroom shortage in Mindanao of 5,318 classrooms, with the highest shortage in the ARMM region, of 1,029 classrooms. Respondent stakeholders reported that the inadequacy of school facilities and resources was a major reason why pupils and students lacked the motivation to attend school.[9]

Implementation of Community Engagement Strategies and Activities

EQuALLS2 set out to **implement a systemic approach to capacity building** for LSBs and PTAs in schools and madrasahs, as a founda-

9 Policy Research on Access to Quality Basic Education for Muslim Learners:

tional access strategy, to provide community-based institutions with the skills and support needed to contribute effectively to school-based management and associated education improvement envisioned by DepED's BESRA.

EQuALLS2 mobilized a variety of local stakeholders at both the barangay and municipal levels over a 24–36 month period. Capacity-building processes undertaken may be viewed as phases along a continuum of (i) awareness and partnership building, (ii) capacity building, and (iii) sustainability building (Figure 4).

Awareness Building Months 1-9	Capacity Building Months 10-24	Sustainability Building Months 25-36
PTA/School Barangay LGU • Orientation and social preparation • Assessment of PTA • Community consultations • Mapping of in-school and out-of-school children and youth education needs • Development of barangay education report card	PTA/School Barangay LGU • Trainings on management, governance, financial management, advocacy,/resource mobilization, etc. • Community Incentive Grant • Reporting on the progress in the implementation of community education plans and projects	PTA/School Barangay LGU • Reviewing direction and planning for sustainability • Transfer of knowledge and skills to incoming sets of officers
PTA/School Barangay LGU • LGU/LSB orientation • Partnership building • Awareness building on state of education	PTA/School Barangay LGU • Consolidating education and skills plan • Support to barangay activities	PTA/School Barangay LGU • Municipal ordinances for replication and sustainability • Capacity resources building

Figure 4. Community capacity building and LGU/LSB engagement processes and timeline

Guided by the above EQuALLS2 community engagement framework, EDC's implementing partners enriched the project with their respective organization's unique approaches and context-specific strategies.

Community Awareness and Partnership Building

IYF-ELSA, Save the Children, and Synergeia used strategies such as municipal education summits and barangay assemblies to convene municipal and community leaders and members to orient them on the EQuALLS2 project and to draw out their aspirations for the education

of children and youth in their communities. For example, in areas covered by Save the Children, opportunities were provided for the participation of children and youth, particularly those out of school, to ensure that their education and skills improvement needs were considered in the planning process. To further broaden participation, the composition of implementing structures was expanded in consultation with municipal and barangay officials.

Consultations with Children and Youth

Save the Children's community engagement approach included consultations with out-of-school children and youth to ensure their perspectives were considered during community education planning. These dialogues with children and youth included creative methodologies, such as theater and visual art workshops, to draw out children and youth aspirations for education and skills improvement.

In geographic areas covered by Synergeia, barangay school boards and municipal level project management teams were established, with membership expanded to include youth, women, and other community members; this helped to strengthen partnerships and promote a sense of shared responsibility among a wider set of community stakeholder representatives.

Strengthening Parent Teacher Associations

BESRA's Key Reform Thrust #1 was to enable school-level stakeholders to continuously improve their own schools, in part by giving more decision-making authority to parents and members of the community, while "providing schools with the means to adopt mechanisms and practices for school-level accountability to parents, community, LGUs, and the DepED hierarchy: including use of School Profiles, School Report Cards and similar modes of reporting measurements of school-wide educational outcomes (participation, completion, and achievement)."[10] Realizing BESRA's vision required developing new skills for PTAs in governance and management, strategic education improvement planning, and financial accountability.

"If schools are to deliver better outcomes in a sustainable manner, the key stakeholders, within the school and the community served by the school, must be enabled and empowered to manage their school-level affairs so that they deliberately and continuously improve the link between their own efforts and their collectively desired educational outcomes."

FINAL BESRA

August 2005

The EQuALLS2 capacity-building program aimed to transform PTAs from low functioning school-based organizations into effective, fully functioning organizations able to contribute significantly to school-based management, the improvement of the teaching and learning environment, and, ultimately, students' learning outcomes.

PTA Capacity Assessments

EDC introduced a PTA Capacity Assessment Tool[11] that was administered by the lead-implementing partners to determine baseline strengths and areas for needed improvement, and to track the progress of PTA organizational development efforts. Baseline results categorized PTAs along a continuum of organizational capacity: getting started, develop-

10 FINAL BESRA August 2005, p.4

11 Modeled after a similar tool developed and used by EDC for its education project in Egypt.

ing, or functioning effectively. (Figure 5) End-of-project assessments were administered to measure the extent to which PTAs were able to apply newly gained knowledge and skills.

More information about the ***PTA Capacity Assessment Tool*** *can be found at equalls.edc.org (Resources section)*

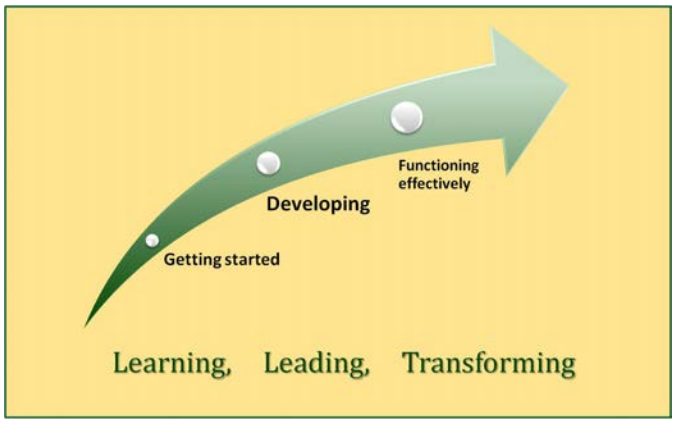


Figure 5. PTA organizational development continuum

PTA Capacity Building

The lead implementing partners facilitated PTA capacity-building training across five main categories of organizational development, outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Capacity-building areas for PTAs

Categories of PTA Capacity Building	Sub-categories
I. Governance and Management	• PTA Membership • Vision, Mission, and Objectives • Leadership • Teamwork • Reporting System • Meetings
II. Education Improvement Planning and Project Management	• Participation in School Improvement Plan • PTA Planning Process • Fund Raising/Resource Mobilization Strategy • Plan Implementation and Monitoring
III. Financial Management	• Budgeting • Financial Reporting System
IV. Networking and Advocacy	• Advocacy • Partnership/Networking
V. Tracking and Communicating Education Improvement	• Monitoring Education Performance • Communicating Education Performance

Project staff and DepED counterparts observed that as PTAs acquired new knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to the five capacity-building areas, they began to assume greater leadership roles and to develop enthusiasm and stronger commitment to support education improvement efforts within their respective communities. Based on a systematic application of capacity assessment results, IYF/ELSA, Save the Children, and Synergeia strengthened the organizational, project management, and financial systems of the expanded PTA through intensive training, on-site follow through coaching and technical assistance, and opportunities to apply their acquired skills.

Revitalizing Local School Boards

Similarly, EQuALLS2 worked to strengthen LSBs along the same capacity-building areas, using the LSB Capacity Assessment Tool. Training and technical assistance for LSBs focused on leadership, strategic planning, budgeting, and local governance. At the municipal level, Synergeia facilitated the development of project management teams (PMT) headed by the mayor, which focused on strengthening the leadership of the local chief executive and expanding the membership of the LSB to broaden stakeholder participation and ownership of education improvement efforts. The PMTs provided hands-on management of all EQuALLS2 programs in the municipality. Additionally, the PMTs led education summits, during which they consulted the communities on the needs of children and guided them on expenditures that should be prioritized.

The most effective LSBs were able to use education performance data to inform the development of their municipal education and skills agenda and the formulation of policies to ensure support for the implementation of such education agenda.

Project Deliverables and Results

EQUALLS2 reached a total of 1,344 school governance organizations, including 1,064 PTAs, 41 LSBs, 38 community associations in barangays without schools, and 201 barangay school boards in municipalities covered by Synergeia. The majority of the groups assisted were from ARMM (Figure 6). An additional 196 organizations were reached by the project in all the regions during transition year.

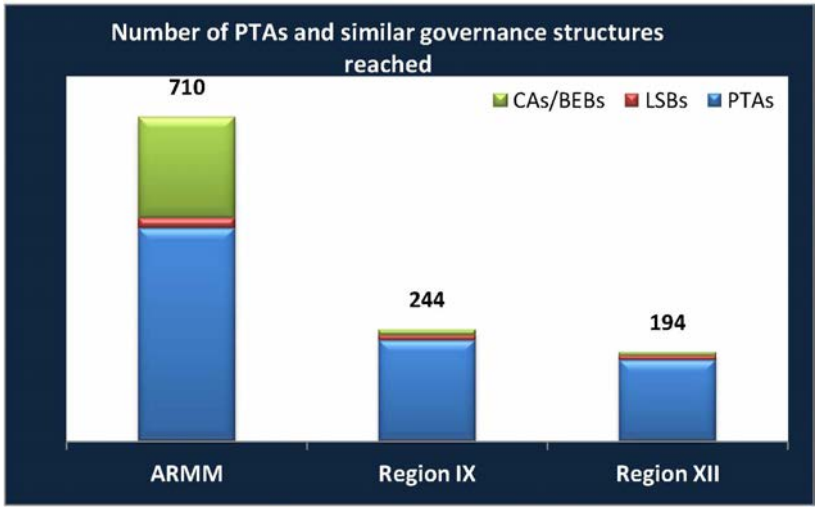


Figure 6. Regional distribution of community groups supported by the project

Of the 747 PTAs assessed, 580 or 78% showed significant improvements in their capacities (Figure 7), exceeding the project's target of 60% of PTAs and other governance structures increasing their governance, management, and advocacy skills. The figure shows that by the final term, the percentage of PTAs at the Getting Started level decreased from 76% to 8%. From 17% at baseline, the percentage of PTAs at the Developing level increased to 52%, and those that were Functioning Effectively increased from 7% at baseline to 39% after capacity building. These results indicate increased knowledge and skills after capacity-building training.

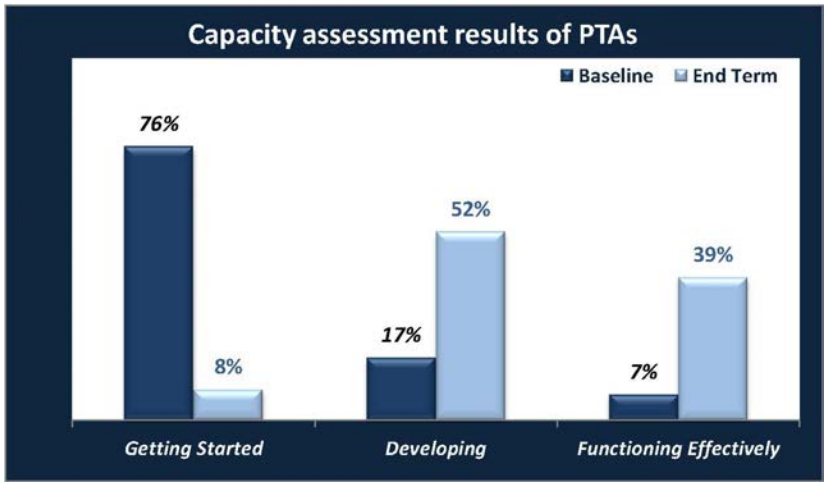


Figure 7. PTA capacity assessment baseline and post-assessment

Results of an assessment of 348 PTAs assisted by Save the Children showed that PTAs demonstrated improved capacities in all competency areas, except governance and management, likely due to the annual change in the set of PTA officers. Some of the positive outcomes from PTA capacity building training in areas served by ELSA-IYF are summarized below in Table 2.

Table 2. Changes in PTA practices after capacity-building training

Before		After	
1.	PTA plans were verbal agreements among members and influenced by school head.	1.	Planning process is participatory, and plans are incorporated in BDP, SIP and MEA.
2.	PTA contributions were made periodically by PTA members only	2.	PTAs are able to mobilize community resources as well as advocate for and secure municipal resources.
3.	Funded projects were limited to classroom facilities improvement.	3.	Varied types of projects, including those that support learning, are being implemented.
4.	Proper recording of financial transactions did not exist.	4.	PTAs have bank accounts and internal control systems.

Similarly, capacity assessment results showed that before engagement 32 LSBs, or 82%, were at the *Getting Started* level. By the final term, almost all the LSBs improved in their knowledge and skills and moved to the next higher level: 11 move to Developing and 24 moved to *Functioning Effectively* (Figure 8).

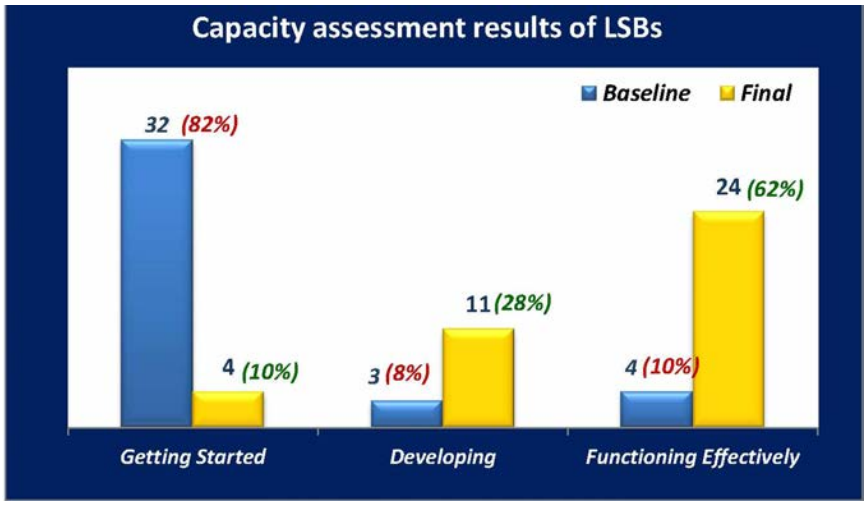


Figure 8. LSB capacity assessment results

Changes in the types of education programs and policies implemented by LGUs and LSBs, and the level of leadership and commitment demonstrated by local leaders, reflect the higher level of awarenes-gained from training, mentoring, and other capacity-building activities. The LSBs in the 11 municipalities served by Synergeia are now meeting regularly and they lead in education improvement planning and implementation; are prioritizing programs for improving teaching and learning, working side by side with infrastructure projects; and are consciously raising resources for education. Although there is a need for follow-through to ensure the sustainability of the positive outcomes, Synergeia's approach demonstrates the effectiveness of a decentralized, on-site, hands-on, and local government-led delivery of basic education.

CIG-funded water system

For example, mayors of Jolo, Upi, and Paglas, (all located in the ARMM) implemented programs that supported or provided incentives to teachers. This was a departure from the practice of using Special Education Funds[12] or other local funds mainly for physical facilities construction or repair or for athletics.

Community Incentive Grants: An Opportunity to Demonstrate Increased Organizational Capacity

PTAs that demonstrated improved management and financial systems, such as being able to open bank accounts and keep orderly and transparent financial documents, received a small Community Incentive Grant (CIG) linked to a school improvement project proposal. The CIG mechanism was designed to provide PTAs with hands-on experience in developing project proposals, implementing priority education projects, and mobilizing community resources to match project CIG funds. EQuALLS2 awarded 810 CIGs (approximately $1,000 each), primarily to PTAs in ARMM. Many of the CIGS were used to finance multiple school improvement activities, so that the 810 CIGs awarded resulted in 3,114 projects implemented. CIGs were used mainly for physical facilities improvement, with 74% of CIG projects completed. It is noteworthy, however, that 26% of CIG projects contributed directly to teaching and learning. (Figure 9) Examples include the purchase and setup of science laboratory apparatus, audiovisual sets, and computer sets.

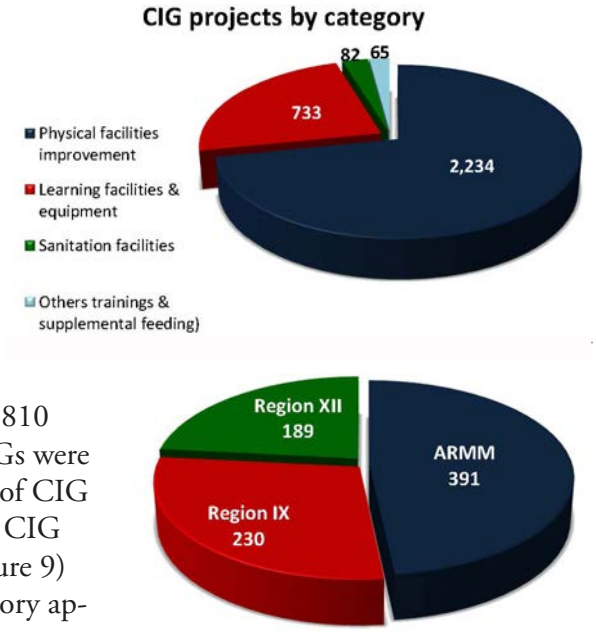


Figure 9. CIG projects by category and distribution by region

12 Special Education Funds are education improvement funds, raised from local tax revenues, managed at the municipal level.

A total of $1,532,807 was allocated to support CIG initiatives: $816,340 from the project and $716,467 from participating communities and local government units (Figure 10).

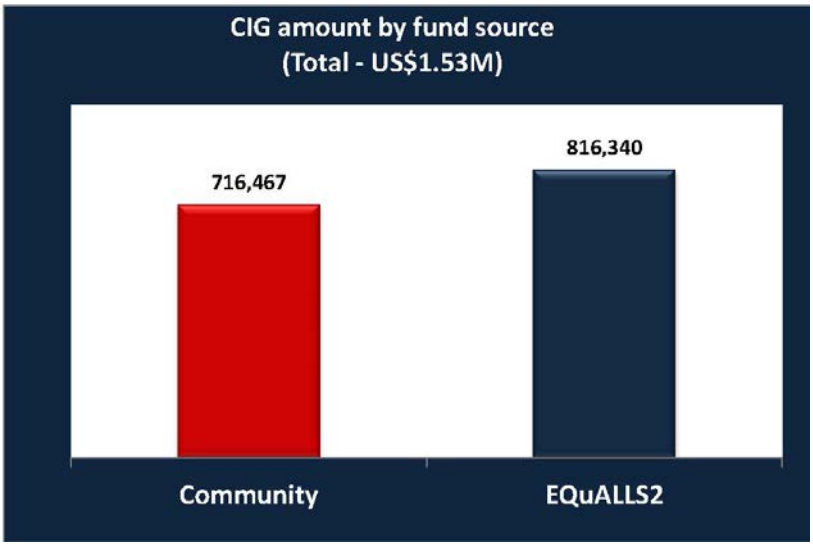


Figure 10. CIG amount by fund source

Improved Community Support for Madrasahs

Capacity building was provided to 21 project-supported madrasahs. Administrators were trained on madrasah improvement planning, school management, budgeting, and financial management, and they were oriented on basic education performance indicators. A modest assistance (approximately $1,000 per madrasah) for minor repair of facilities served as a mechanism for administrators to gain experience in managing school projects and building networks with donors and other institutions for additional resources.

Parents of 45 pupils from Markadz Bilal Bin Rabah Al-Islamie (madrasah), in Malapatan, take part in Brigada Eskwela 2011–2012 to prepare classrooms for the start of classes.

Parents were mobilized to work with administrators and teachers during the *Brigada Eskwela* (annual DepED school cleanup at the start of every school year), a first-time experience for many parents who send their children to madrasahs. Effective school management, improved facilities, and the adoption of the Standard Madrasa Curriculum are DepED prerequisites for recognition of private madrasahs and eligibility for government funding assistance. Thus, training for madrasah teachers (*asatidz*) on reading, English, and math content mastery; instructional practices; and the adoption of the Standard Madrasah Curriculum were greatly appreciated by these communities.

Building Sustainability Mechanisms

EQuALLS2 worked with PTAs and LSBs to develop sustainable mechanisms to ensure that they continue to support education improvement after the close of the EQuALLS2 Project.

- **Legal registration of PTAs and madrasahs.** While PTAs are legally recognized organizations, they encounter challenges when trying to open bank accounts; some banks require extensive legal credentials (such as DOLE, DSWD or SEC registration). EQuALLS2 assisted both PTAs and madrasahs to develop their constitution and by-laws and worked with them to become legally registered with SEC registration, which enables organizations to collaborate and access funding with donors and other institutions.

- **The Barangay Education Report Card (BERC).** A final step in the PTA and LGU strengthening process was training community structures on how to collect and analyze data to track and share progress on education and skills improvement plans for in-school and OSY out-of-school youth using performance indicators related to physical facilities, student and learner achievement, teaching and learning resources, community participation, and education in emergencies (EiE), as applicable.

Tuyan Elementary School Principal Edgar Egano presented the BERC during their Barangay Education Assembly on March 8, 2011. The Assembly was attended by 637 stakeholders, composed of parents, teachers, school officials, students, and local and barangay government officials.

Emphasizing the importance of data-driven progress reporting and decision-making, EDC worked with parents, local government units, and other stakeholders of five municipalities to model a BERC system. The process brought PTAs and community stakeholders together with principals, teachers, and instructional managers[13] to collect and analyze data on local education problems and the status of education improvement.

Municipal and Barangay Technical Working Groups (M/BTWGs) were trained as BERC facilitators to pass on the system and the know-how to set up the BERC to new sets of school, barangay, and municipal officials. Model municipalities have passed resolutions to ensure municipal-wide adoption and continuity of the BERC system.

- **Institutionalizing education and skills improvement planning processes.** Municipalities with supportive mayors, such as Margosatubig in Zamboanga del Sur, formally created education and skills planning bodies. These planning bodies were mandated to adopt the community and municipal education and skills planning processes introduced by EQuALLS through Save the Children. Ad-

13 Instructional managers are those providing basic education sessions and training to out-of-school children and youth.

ditionally, they were provided with funding for priority projects to advance education improvement in their communities.

- **Tools and systems for sustainability.** It was important for the EQuALLS2 project to leave as a legacy to PTAs systems such as the opening of bank accounts and reporting of finances, as well as materials and tools that will guide them in their activities. Tools include the PTA and LSB Capacity Assessment Tools and BERC Handbook referred to above; a how-to kit containing training modules on organizational development and project management; PTCA Handbook focusing on common policies and procedures helpful to PTAs, particularly in resource mobilization; and PTA manual with modules on parenting and a simple guide to PTA organizational skills.

Classroom Construction and Repair

A total of 193 classrooms were constructed, and 1,242 were repaired in some of the hardest-to-reach, conflict-affected areas of Mindanao (Figure 11). Of these, 108 classrooms were constructed and 480 were repaired through the GDA partnership with Petron Foundation. Also included were 577 (6 constructed and 571 repaired) community learning centers (CLCs) for OSCY basic education courses, and the rest were classroom repairs carried out by PTAs using CIG and other funds. Approximately 40,850 students and 45,407 OSCY benefited from the newly constructed and/or repaired learning facilities.

Datu Pangolima ES, Malpatan, Saranggani Province

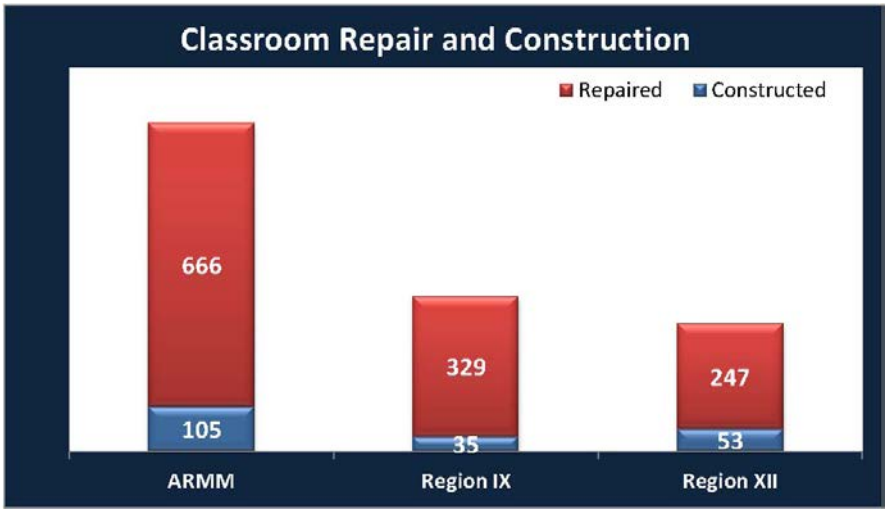


Figure 11. Classroom repair and construction by region

Project Impact and Results on Improved Access to Education

Through the combined efforts of EDC, IYF, Petron Foundation, Save the Children, Synergeia Foundation and the EQuALLS2 DepED and LGU partners, the project exceeded its access targets, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. IR1 FACTS Indicators - targets and accomplishments

Indicators	Targets	Accomplishments	% Accomplished
Number of classrooms repaired with USG assistance	1,180	1,242	105%
Number of classrooms constructed with USG assistance	120	193	161%
Number of learners enrolled in USG-supported primary schools or equivalent non-school-based settings	310,000	465,574	150%
Number of PTAs or similar school governance structures supported by USG	850	1,344	158%
Additional indicator			
Number of CIGs awarded		810	

In addition to the USAID FACTS targets, EQuALLS2 also measured project impact against student completion and retention rates.

Completion Rate, Elementary

The progress in the completion rates (percentage of Grade 1 entrants who complete the level) in schools supported by EQuALLS2 was one of the impact measures used by the project. This indicator assumed that progress was a function of community engagement and professional development, all other factors affecting completion held constant.[14] A total of 461 schools were included in this analysis, which represented 91% of the EQuALLS2 schools with complete data for all school years. Figure 12 shows that the overall completion rate increased, but the 1.7 percentage-point increase is below the targeted 4-percentage point increase.

14 This analysis included schools that received at least one intervention from both EQuALLS2 IR1 and IR2 components and with complete data from SY 2002–2003 to SY 2010–2011. It should be noted that SY 2007–2008 was considered the baseline in this analysis because no data for SY 2001–2002 was obtained from DepED, since the Basic Education Information System (BEIS) was established only in 2002. Data from SYs prior to SY 2006–2007 were included to track the Grade 1 entrants five years back and the graduates from that batch.

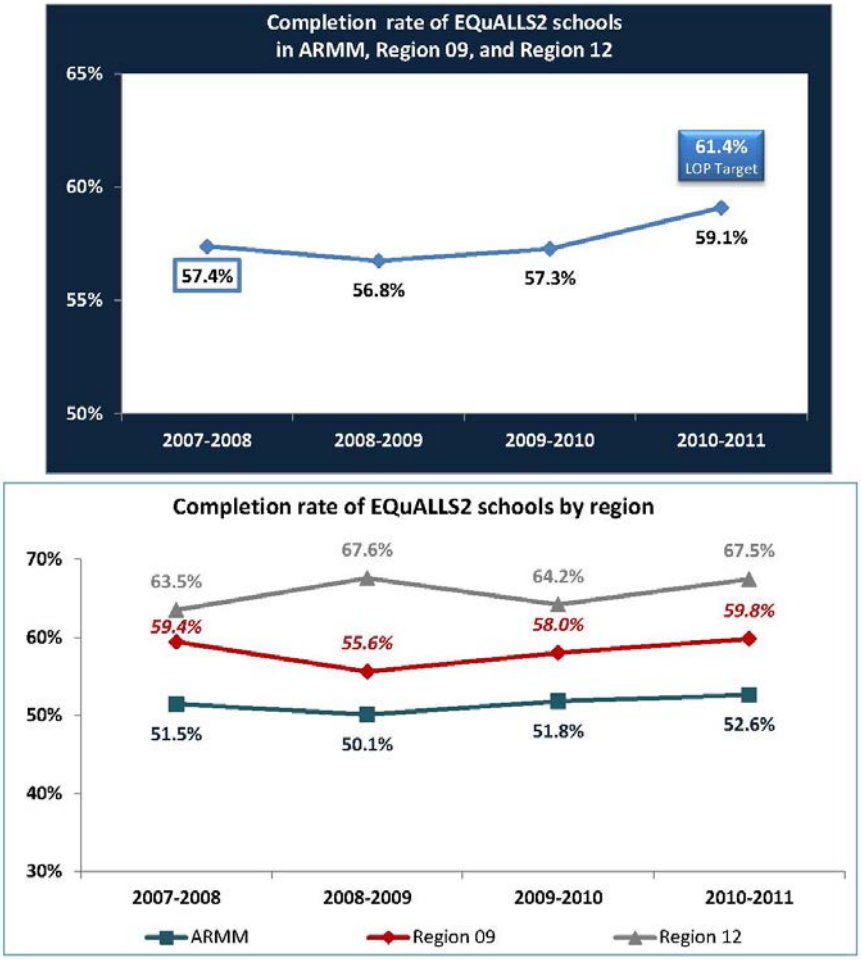


Figure 12: Completion rates (SY 2007–2008 to SY 2010–2011) n=461 schools

Retention Rate

The retention rate (RR) measured the proportion of pupils who continued to be in school in the succeeding school year. This analysis assumed that families (parents) and educators had great influence in keeping school children in school. Although enrollment is affected by several factors, these have been held constant, and the retention rate was considered a function of community engagement and professional development.[15] Analysis of 461 EQuALLS2-assisted schools, which represented

15 This analysis compared the enrollment from SY 2006–2007 to SY 2010–2011. Only schools that received at least one intervention from both IR1 and IR2 components and with complete enrollment data from Grades 1–5 for the past five school years were included. Although SY 2005–2006 was not part of the EQuALLS2 implementation phase, enrollment data from that SY were included to determine the retention rate in SY2006–2007.

91% of the total EQuALLS2 schools with complete enrollment data (Figure 13), shows an overall increase of 2.5 percentage points. This increase is below the project target of a 4-percentage point increase from the SY 2006–2007 baseline level.

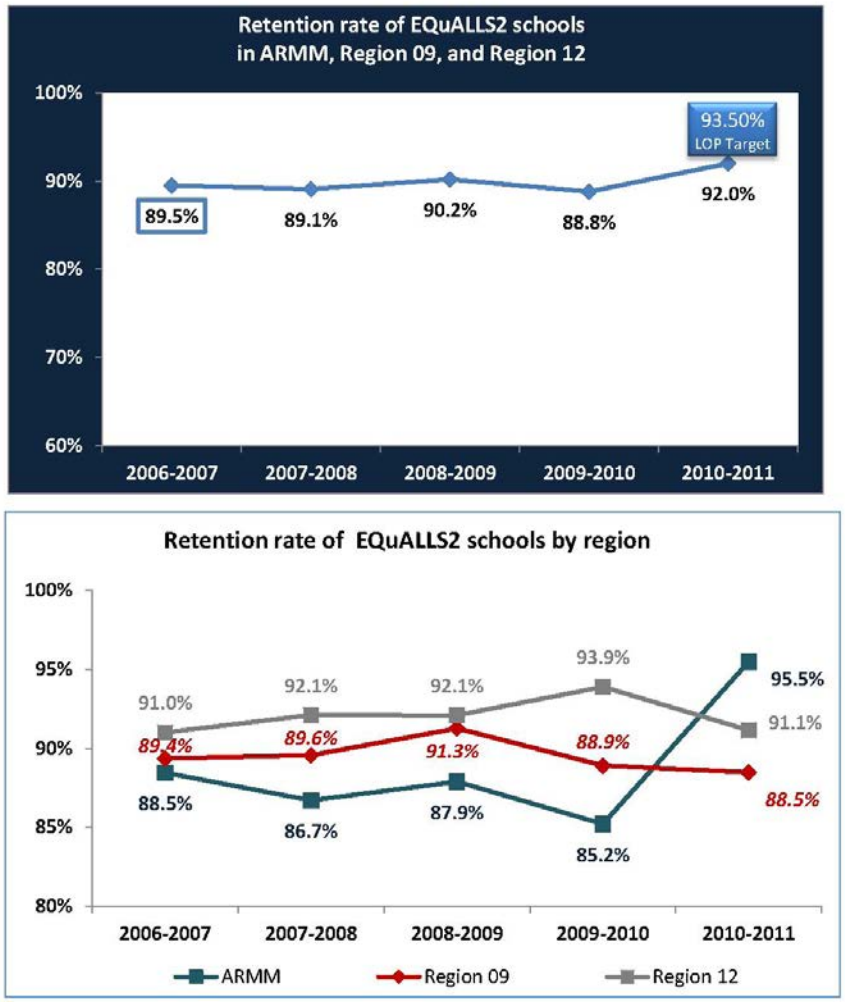


Figure 13: Retention rates (SY 2007–2008 to SY 2010–2011)
n=461 schools

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The involvement of schools, PTAs, and barangay and municipal LGUs and LSBs during social mobilization, planning, and decision-making for education improvement initiatives facilitated community partnership building and personal commitment, and resulted in the mobilization of otherwise untapped local and external human, financial, and in-kind resources.

- Expanding LSBs and PTAs to include youth and other community representatives was a successful approach to increasing broad-based participation of community stakeholders in education improvement.

- Youth engagement and youth consultations, such as those implemented by ELSA and Save the Children, helped to ensure that specific youth education needs were addressed and, at the same time, energized youth with confidence and leadership skills.

Community engagement efforts must deliberately include mechanisms that systematically address OSCY education and skills improvement needs.

- Support for education and skills improvement needs of OSCY is most often inadequately attended to because there is no PTA equivalent institution dedicated to overseeing OSCY concerns.

- Programs for OSCY should be linked with community capacity-building efforts rather than implemented as separate activities for sustainability. A good EQuALLS2 example of such convergence was the employment of OSY who had completed skills training in building, wiring, and welding in school building construction and repair.

- Community engagement should include partnerships with civil society/nongovernment organizations and other informal groups, particularly those active in providing education and related services in barangays without schools.

With greater awareness of their mandate, LGUs and LSBs were able to mobilize resources for education improvement, notwithstanding poverty and conflict.

- Orientation of LSBs on their roles and responsibilities led to a better appreciation of local education issues and their mandate to respond to related concerns.

- Results of an EQuALLS2 research study to quantify LGU support to education showed that the level of Special Education Fund allocation is generally inadequate, but both municipal and barangay LGUs and LSBs engaged by the project have used local development funds to respond to local education concerns.

- Parallel to organizational development, capacity improvements for

LGUs and LSBs to collect property taxes and use SEF funds for education improvement, as seen in the geographic areas assisted by Synergiea Foundation, should be expanded systemwide.

The leadership and strategic policy interventions of DepED, LGUs, and LSBs are critical elements for institutionalizing mechanisms and processes initiated by the project for sustained delivery of quality education services.

- Capacity-building support for mayors, such as EQuALLS2 programming carried out by Synergiea, should be expanded, recognizing that mayors are the key figures with both power and resources (such as the local development fund) to guide and influence the implementation of education improvement programs.

- Others need to build on Save the Children's successful advocacy work with LGUs that led to the creation of municipal education and skills councils with a regular budget allocation through a municipal ordinance.

- Engaging division, regional, and higher levels of the DepED hierarchy from the beginning of project implementation to mobilize institutional support for the continuity, replication, and scaling up of mechanisms, such as the BERC and CIG and processes such as capacity building of new sets of PTA officers have generated positive outcomes in communities and schools.

Community engagement proved to be an important foundation for effective madrasah assistance programming.

- The establishment of a madrasah PTA and the training of madrasah administrators in madrasah improvement planning resulted in more transparent and accountable governance and financial management systems, which enabled the mobilization of increased parent and community support.

- The capacity of madrasah administrators, particularly in network building and resource mobilization, should be continued.

- Consultations with all community stakeholders before the implementation of program interventions ensured that the program was well received and a sense of ownership was able to develop.

Capacity-building training for madrasah administrators

The Barangay Education Report Card (BERC) tool inspired community stakeholders to track education improvement indicators.

- Municipal and barangay government officials gained a deeper appreciation of their role in improving their constituents' access to education opportunities.

- At Save the Children sites, a resolution enacted by the LGU and LSB facilitated the establishment of BERC as a key tool to inform education improvement programs and related budget allocation for education projects and activities.

More information about LGU Case Studies can be found at equalls.edc.org (Resources section)

INTERMEDIATE RESULT 2 (IR2)

Strengthened capacity for teaching English, math, and science

Approach

The second of the three Intermediate Results for the EQuALLS2 project focused on *the strengthened capacity of educators to teach English, math, and science*, or on the content knowledge and instructional skills needed to ensure that students are receiving a quality education. Testing conducted during the first phase of EQuALLS (2004–2006) showed that teachers' own content knowledge of English, math, and science was weak, with average scores on content assessments equivalent to just a grade level or two above their students.

In addition to analyzing the needs, gaps, and opportunities for strengthening *teachers' skills and knowledge* in teaching English, science, and math, the EQuALLS2 design took into consideration three additional domains of an educator professional development system that support and sustain educational improvement:

- ***Students' skills and knowledge*** – What do students need to know and be able to do? Under what conditions will they learn?
- ***Incentives*** – What rewards encourage improvement? What are the criteria for incentives and who will decide?
- ***Resources*** – What supports are needed for education system improvement: classroom conditions, quality of teaching and learning materials, or community support and resources?

This analysis led to a three-pronged approach to achieving Result 2:

Strategy 1: Increase the access of teachers to professional development by:

- Developing school-based peer learning among colleagues supported by DepED district and division learning opportunities that are based on schools' learning goals
- Supporting incentives for teacher professional development, such as time for professional learning within the school day, career promotions, and academic credit for participation in school-based professional development
- Improving the system of distributing donated books and other learning materials to be more responsive to teachers' classroom needs and build opportunities into training for teachers to learn about incorporating materials into instruction
- Providing opportunities for teachers to access and use technology to enhance their teaching practices

Professional development for teachers was made available to all teachers in all levels, including (1) centralized core training and refresher training programs for learning facilitators, (2) needs-based supplemental training for all teachers at the district level, and (3) localized school-based peer learning.

EQuALLS2 trained English, science, and math learning facilitators, who in turn provided coaching, mentoring, and in-school workshops for fellow teachers. This central strategy was supported by additional opportunities for teachers to develop new skills, strengthen existing ones, and take an active role in enhancing classroom activities. The EQuALLS2 lead implementing partners facilitated district-based teacher training workshops that were designed to address localized needs of teachers in specific municipalities.

In selected municipalities that demonstrated the ability to support and manage technology inputs, a critical mass of teachers (100 teachers per municipality) was directly trained by Microsoft expert trainers, and technology hubs were established for trained teachers to use with their co-teachers. Book fairs were organized for teachers to "shop" for donated books that were relevant to their students' needs and skill levels. In addition, teachers received assistance during trainings on ways to integrate these materials into their regular lesson plans.

Strategy 2: Decrease the obstacles to quality professional development by:

- Standardizing and aligning core training for English, science, and math learning facilitators and DepED administrators to the Philippines Elementary Learning Competencies (PELC) and focus on teachers' and students' least-learned competencies;
- Providing core training in English, math, and science for learning facilitators, supported by refresher training at the division and district level and supplemental training to meet the needs of local districts.

EDC promoted "standardization" as the use of a common framework and design among lead implementing partners for the training of master trainers, who in turn trained learning facilitators; consistency in the number of training contact hours; and the common technical guidelines for implementing localized and specialized professional development.

The quality of teacher training was ensured by engaging consultants to develop the training modules and to train master trainers from Mindanao-based Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) and selected DepED

supervisors. Consultants in science and math came from the University of the Philippines National Institute for Science and Math Education Development (UP NISMED), and in English from DepED's National English Proficiency Program (NEPP). Effective instructional practices were modeled during teacher training sessions: communicative language teaching in English and the practical work approach in science and math.

Training content and design were based on the results of teacher assessments, which helped identify gaps in teachers' subject-content knowledge.

- For English, the Test of English Proficiency for Teachers (TEPT) of the Department of Education National Educational Testing and Research Center was used.
- For science and math, Diagnostic Tests for sixth-grade pupils were used in the absence of nationally standardized math and science teacher assessment tools that could meet the project timeline.
- The Standards-Based Classroom Observation Protocol for Educators (SCOPE) was the framework for teacher and supervisor training in instructional practices. Intensive professional development was provided for DepED administrators in using SCOPE both as a research tool and as the basis for providing feedback and assistance to their teachers.

Strategy 3: Ensure future *sustainability* by:

- Working in close partnership with DepED regional, division, and district administrators
- Harnessing local teacher education institutions (TEIs) in the project's educator professional development programs
- Developing the capacity of local governmental and civil society organizations to be involved in education improvement

By helping DepED, PTAs, and local government partners develop the tools and information needed for planning, decision-making, and continuous improvement rather than focusing exclusively on the continuity of specific programs, EQuALLS2 focused on long-term sustainability from the start.

Investments in individuals (educators at all levels); in DepED regional and division structures and processes; and in community members and their organizations (parents/PTAs, elected officials/local school boards, and other stake holders) have been the primary sustainability strategies. New tools or concepts were introduced as complementary to existing programs or tools, and were refined and adapted in partnership with DepED. For example, elements in the Standards-based Classroom

Observation Protocol for Educators (SCOPE) were aligned with the instructional practices outlined in DepED's National Competency Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) and supplemented their existing STAR (Situation-Tasks-Action-Result) supervision tool; the Learning Partnership Program (LPP) formalized and systematized DepED's informal mentoring program; and the ICT Program supported DepED's ICT4E plan by extending capacity-building training to elementary school teachers who had not yet been reached since secondary school teachers were prioritized. More detailed examples of working through local government to ensure sustainability are found in the previous section on Result 1.

TEIs can contribute to educators' professional development by strengthening their teacher education curricula and pre-service training in the ESM concepts and instructional practices. TEIs can also work closely with DepED in supporting educators' professional development in-service programs.

Project Deliverables and Program Enhancements

EQuALLS2 exceeded both the targeted number of school administrators and educators trained and the number of supplementary learning materials provided to teachers and schools.

Table 4. IR2 FACTS Indicators - targets and accomplishments

Indicators	Targets	Accomplishments	% Accomplished
School administrators and officials trained	2,238	3,551	159%
Teachers and educators trained	35,000	38,490	110%
Supplementary learning materials provided	1,800,000	2,116,701	117%

Over the course of the project, EQuALLS2 professional development program reached 21,072 individual teachers. Of these teachers, 1,868 were English, science, and math learning facilitators, who received an average of 6.47 training days, equivalent to 51.76 hours of training per year, to strengthen their subject-content knowledge, instructional practices, and ability to mentor other teachers. The project worked with 537 English learning facilitators, 737 math learning facilitators and 594 science learning facilitators. Through a train-the-trainer approach, learning facilitators completed a core set of direct training courses facilitated by lecturers from local TEIs and local DepED administrators who had been trained by subject-matter experts from UP NISMED and by DepED national's NEPP consultants. The rest of the teachers received

on average of 3.31 training days from trained learning facilitators and DepED administrators, equivalent to 26.48 hours of professional development per year.[16]

Identifying, training, and supporting learning facilitators in every school was part of the strategy to create English, math and science expertise at the school level. In order to develop this local capacity, every EQuALLS2 supported school-nominated teachers who met the selection criteria, which included: good interpersonal and leadership skills; sufficient subject matter knowledge (as assessed by a standardized test); successful completion of a core set of training courses; and, commitment to becoming learning facilitators. Training courses for learning facilitators were structured around the least-learned Philippine Elementary Learning Competency skills and topics per grade, and also identified through the results of the National Achievement Test as well as by the results of teacher testing. Core training courses were held on average every five months to allow learning facilitators time not only to apply what they learned in the classroom but to also train their co-teachers. A total of 2,925 individual administrators were trained in order to provide the necessary leadership and structure to support the learning facilitators and help sustain project inputs.

Challenges and Responses

The project's original program intent and design were enhanced and adapted along the way to address challenges and limitations brought about by the realities on the ground.

Challenge #1: Low-skilled teachers

The first limitation encountered was the lack of teachers who were able to meet the set criteria to become learning facilitators. They either did not meet the standard set for the qualifying test or were unable to complete the core set of trainings due to personal reasons or to existing teaching workload.

The Test of English Proficiency for Teachers (TEPT),[17] of the Department of Education, was used as a qualifying test for nominated English teachers. For nominated math and science teachers, the Science and Math Diagnostic Tests for 6th graders,[18] developed by the Center for

16 Data from EQuALLS2 MIS

17 TEPT covers three major competency areas related to English language skills, namely structure of language, reading comprehension, and written expression.

18 The Science Diagnostic Test for 6th graders covers the following topics: people, animal, plants and environment, materials, energy, earth, and beyond the solar system. The Math Diagnostic Test for 6th graders covers the following topics: number theory, fractions, decimals, ratio, proportion, percent, geometry and measurement,

Educational Measurement, Inc., were used in the absence of teacher assessment tools.

- Out of the 1,058 English teachers from 537 schools, 55 districts, in 13 divisions who were tested, only 51% of them met the minimum 50% score level.
- For math, 51% of the 983 teacher-examinees were able to answer correctly 49% of the test items. Almost half of the teachers tested had math proficiency levels higher than those of an average sixth-grade student.
- For science, out of the 1,437 teachers who took the test, 72%, or 1,034, had a mean total percent correct score of 59%, indicating higher proficiency in science than that of an average sixth-grade student.[19]

Save the Children reported that a number of teachers who qualified to be learning facilitators taught higher grade levels but were tasked to mentor lower grade level teachers due to the lack of qualified teachers from the lower grades. In a number of cases, these higher-grade level teachers received training on topics appropriate for the lower grades but not for their grade levels; thus they were unable to apply what they learned directly in their own classrooms.

To address these challenges, lead implementing partners used various strategies. Save the Children designed the Basic Intensive Training in ESM Instruction for teachers in schools with no identified mentors. The course content was similar to the Core ESM trainings but tailored to the skills level and needs of the teachers who would not have regular access to learning facilitators. All three partners conducted a special run of the Core ESM courses to help "catch up" the qualified teachers who missed one or two of the Core courses. This way, they were able to maximize the number of learning facilitators. In addition, Synergeia trained administrators to be learning facilitators in schools without qualified learning facilitators.

Challenge #2: No officially approved or structured time for mentoring during school hours

Though a mentoring system was mandated and put in place by DepED for the National English Proficiency Program (NEPP), mentoring was most often conducted on an ad hoc and informal basis when EQuALLS2 began.

In addition, the core trainings for learning facilitators were sequentially

statistics, and algebra.

19 CEM submitted reports on results of math and science tests, dated July 2008 and December 2008, respectively.

designed to first strengthen qualified teachers' content knowledge before training them on effective mentoring approaches. Due to the misalignment between the project's timetable and the academic school year and the reality that available training time for teachers in a school year is limited (mostly during the two-month summer break and the two-week semester break), implementing partners often asked learning facilitators to conduct echo trainings to their co-teachers after completion of training courses. In some areas, partners required learning facilitators to conduct mentoring with small group of teachers despite limited preparation on how to be mentors.

For more information, see Learning Series 6 and the Learning Partnership Program Manual at equalls.edc.org (Resources section)

To address these challenges, EQuALLS2 and DepED worked together to develop a more systematic approach to mentoring, renaming the program as the Learning Partnership Program (LPP). The LPP built on the original NEPP mentoring program by advocating for a more formal and structured system, where all teachers, not just English teachers, are given time and support during school hours to work collaboratively to establish and work towards mastery of learning goals. The LPP evolved as the primary strategy for sustaining school-based professional development for all teachers. In addition, the project worked closely with DepED regional offices to issue policy guidelines for its implementation. For example, in Region 12, the first and third Fridays of the month were set aside for mentoring or learning partnership-related activities. The majority of EQuALLS2-supported division offices issued special memoranda allocating specific time for teachers' professional learning. At Save the Children sites, LPP's objectives and tasks were integrated into school improvement plans, thus ensuring the allocation of DepED MOOE (Maintenance Operations and other Expenditures) budget for LPP-related activities, such as mentor circles, exhibits, and in-depth training activities.

"As a learning facilitator, I have become more confident in myself. I have learned to face challenges and find solutions. More importantly, the Learning Partnership Program has strengthened my relationship with my co-teachers. They now see me as a valuable resource. I find this humbling and empowering at the same time."

– Dulce Mayordomo, Grade 5–6 Science Teacher, Tuyan ES, Malapatan

The three lead implementing partners also worked closely with LGUs and local education stakeholders to mobilize resources to support LPP. In Margosatubig, a municipality supported by Save the Children, the LGU allotted an additional Php1M to continue initiatives such as the LPP. At ELSA sites, local stakeholders organized mentors assemblies and ESM fairs to encourage cross-pollination among learning facilitators and to publicize and highlight effective mentoring strategies. At Synergeia sites, DepED district offices worked closely with LGUs, such as Jolo, Siasi and Upi, to implement a rewards program to encourage outstanding teachers.

Nurturing and supporting strong and dynamic leadership at the district and school-levels also played a crucial role in driving the implementation of LPP. Teachers in schools with active learning partnerships found

their relationships with their co-teachers improved due to the increased opportunities for collaboration and the open sharing of knowledge and teaching strategies.

Challenge #3: Limited English proficiency of teachers

Another major challenge to developing school-level capacity in math and science was the limited English language ability of most teachers. Since English is the medium of instruction for both math and science, raising teachers' English proficiency was imperative in order to make significant gains in the content knowledge level of teachers and, ultimately, their students. Students with limited English language ability tended to lag behind their English-proficient peers in all content areas, but especially in academic subjects that were high in language demand.[20]

For more information on improving the English proficiency of teachers and students, see Learning Series 5 and 12 at equalls.edc.org (Resources section)

Over the course of the project, a range of interventions addressed the English language needs of teachers, from language camps to intensive workshops on teaching reading in English, in addition to the core English training provided to English learning facilitators, who then mentored fellow English teachers.

Based on lessons learned during the early years of EQuALLS2, during the final year of the project a whole school approach was developed to tackle the problem of persistently low English reading skills of both students and their teachers. All teachers in a small subset of EQuALLS2 schools were provided opportunities to strengthen their reading and oral fluency skills in English as a second language. Through intensive workshops, they learned strategies for teaching beginning reading, for working with struggling readers, and for reinforcing developmental reading in teaching science and math in the higher elementary grades. The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) was used to track and assess students' 10 reading sub-skills, from the most basic skill of orientation to print to comprehension skills. Grades 1 to 3 students performed significantly better on the post-test in all of the reading components assessed compared to the pre-test, and the mean post-test scores from grades 1–3 were significantly greater than the mean scores of the non-WSRP schools, indicating that a whole school approach is making a difference in the teaching and learning of English reading, although additional research is needed.

"Before, I needed to read a paragraph twice or thrice before being able to grasp what was written. Now, the understanding comes naturally the first time I read the paragraph."

- Evangeline Langub, Datu Pendililang Piang CES, Maguindanao 2 Schools Division

Challenge #4: Lack of access to appropriate instructional materials

Another limitation to creating and sustaining school-level instruction

20 English Language Learners and Math Achievement: A Study of Opportunity to Learn and Language Accommodation. http://www.cse.ucla.edu/products/reports/R702.pdf

and learning expertise was the lack of access to appropriate and effective instructional materials by both teachers and students. Focus group discussions with teachers and principals indicated that the majority felt that teaching and learning gains would be sustained if teachers had access to more resources and materials.

Through its Global Development Alliance (GDA) partnerships with Brothers Brother Foundation and National Book Store of the Philippines, 2.1 million supplementary books, dictionaries, and instructional materials (including math manipulatives, science equipment, computers, laptops and printers), were placed in more than 850 schools and community learning centers during the implementation of the project.

To ensure that this impressive number of supplementary books and materials would be demand driven and well aligned with DepED's Revised Basic Education curriculum, the EQuALLS2 book program was established to undertake the following:

- **Demand-driven book fairs** – A survey conducted with 215 teachers from eight municipalities,[21] who participated in EQuALLS2 book shopping activities, showed that teachers used the supplementary books mostly for free-time reading, storytelling and seat work activities.

- **Teacher training on use of supplementary books** – The book program complemented teacher trainings, where teachers gained additional content knowledge, which in turn helped them better identify books they needed to increase their students' competencies in content areas they traditionally found hard to teach and learn.

- **Book use commitment forms** – These forms stipulated that supplementary books should be placed in classrooms rather than libraries in order to make the books more accessible to students and to create a more print-rich classroom environment.

The placement of books in classrooms was encouraged because the majority of the EQuALLS2-supported schools do not have libraries, and for those that do, the libraries do not have full-time librarians and thus remain closed for most of the day.

Math and science learning kits were also provided to learning facilita-

"I use the science books with my students to learn about the solar system. Since there are multiple copies of the same book, every 2 pupils share 1 book. After they read about the solar system, I ask them to draw the solar system on a cartolina which was also provided by EQuALLS2."

– Jovy Castro, Grade 4 Science Teacher, Blinkong CES, Lutayan

21 The eight municipalities are Cotabato City, Tantangan, Lutayan, Malapatan, Bongao, Midsayap, Datu Paglas, and San Miguel. Survey was administered to teachers who had participated in previous book shopping activities. Survey was administered during other activities such as ICT trainings, school monitoring visits, and book shopping activities. The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback to inform the operation of the project's book program.

tors to allow them to carry out more engaging and interactive activities using manipulatives and activity sheets with their students and to share and model new approaches with their fellow teachers. Additional kits were distributed to teachers who were learning partners and who attended district trainings led by the learning facilitators. A survey of a sample of learning facilitators showed that almost 100% of them found materials in the kits appropriate to their teaching needs, and over 80% said that they share the learning kits with their fellow teachers or learning partners. In addition, lead implementing partners conducted supplemental workshops for all teachers on the development of instructional materials using inexpensive locally available materials.

Technology was seen as another tool for teachers to complement and strengthen their teaching practices and facilitate their own professional growth. The EQuALLS2 ICT program established ICT hubs in 14 municipalities (with 16 computers each) and provided direct training on basic computer skills to 100 teachers in each municipality. [22] A total of 1,402 teachers acquired skills to help them perform teaching-related tasks more efficiently, such as preparing lesson plans, creating visual aids, and accessing subject-related content. One of the popular resources was the online encyclopedia Encarta, cited by over half of the teachers who responded to post-training surveys.[23]

Challenge #5 – Implementation in a conflict environment
Finally, the peace and order situation in Mindanao was an ongoing challenge. For teachers and students, suspension of classes due to conflict limited time on tasks. Implementing partners developed supplemental trainings, such as Save the Children's Education in Emergencies and ELSA's Peace Education, to help teachers continue with their teaching despite the situation. Both programs provided teachers with materials and strategies to help their students cope psychologically with ongoing conflict.

While the project tried to adhere closely to the original program design, enhancements and adaptations were necessary in order to address the changing realities over the course of the five-year implementation period.

"Before the Science kits were given to our school by EQuALLS2, majority of my students did not even know how graduated cylinders, beakers or test tubes looked like. Ever since the project gave Science kits to schools, my students have been able to manipulate these Science equipment with ease and confidence."

- Edna Santander, Science Teacher, Lun Padidu ES, Malapatan

22 The 14 municipalities that received the EQuALLS2 ICT Program were Cotabato City, Datu Paglas, Dinas, Esperanza, Isabela City, Lutayan, Malapatan, Margosatubig, Midsayap, Olutanga, Pigkawayan, Salug, Tantangan, and Upi.

23 The pre- and post-surveys were administered to teachers who attended the Basic ICT training and who participated in focus group discussions held from 3 to 12 months following training. Adjusting for inconsistencies and incomplete surveys, the final number of respondents equals 786.

Project Impact

In addition to tracking the numbers of educators reached and materials distributed, EQuALLS2 looked at the impact of its educator professional development program on teachers' professional growth and competency and, indirectly, on student achievement. Assessments of teachers' content knowledge and instructional practices and assessment of student learning using the National Achievement Test (NAT) were the primary ways the project looked at results.

Using NAT scores as an indicator of project outcomes is highly limiting, and EQuALLS2 cannot claim direct attribution for any positive increase, as multiple factors such as parent education level, poverty, and language skills can also affect student performance. However, the project found value in tracking publicly available national data to help communicate the results of EQuALLS2 in a more comprehensive and meaningful way. In addition, limitations in the approaches used to measure teacher and student performance over the course of the project are duly noted in the discussion of the results.

To measure improved educational quality through strengthened capacity for teaching English, math and science, the project committed to tracking the following three indicators:

- Increase in the elementary school teachers' test scores in English, math and science
- Increase in student achievement scores
- Count of educators using educational technologies

Table 5 summarizes the LOP targets and accomplishments for the three indicators.

Table 5. IR2 Strand 2 Indicator - targets and accomplishments

Indicator	LOP Targets	LOP Targets
Increase in student achievement scores (NAT Scores)	10% increase from baseline year of SY 2006–2007	28% increase
Elementary teachers are better prepared to teach English, math, and science	At least 50% of teachers observed increased their SCOPE scores	SCOPE: 56%
	At least 50% of teachers tested increased their average scores by 5% in English, math, and science	English: 37% Science: 55% Math: 44%
	Teachers tested increased their reading and comprehension skills by at least one level	ORFA: 54% SRI: 42%
Number of educators using educational technologies	600 ICT trained teachers (60% of 1,000 teachers targeted for training in basic computer literacy)	86% or 679 out of 786 teachers who completed both pre- and post-surveys

Increase in student achievement scores (NAT Scores). The educator capacity-building and professional development program was intended to improve learning in English, science, and math for students in Mindanao. NAT scores for English, science, and math were used to track student performance over the life of the project. However, not all EQuALLS2-supported schools had complete NAT data from SY 2006–2007 to SY 2010–2011. For the analysis below (Figure 14), a total of 449 schools were included: 140 schools from ARMM, 173 from Region 9, and 136 from Region 12. While it is not possible to attribute change in NAT scores solely to EQuALLS2, NAT scores did increase for students in the schools with EQuALLS2 trained teachers and administrators.

The project set a target of 10% increase from the baseline year of SY 2006–2007. The project exceeded this target, with an overall 28% increase in NAT scores for English, science, and math. At 65.3 for SY 2010–2011, this score is close to the national NAT ESM average of 66.11 for SY 2010–2011.[24]

24 Based on DepED NETRC data.

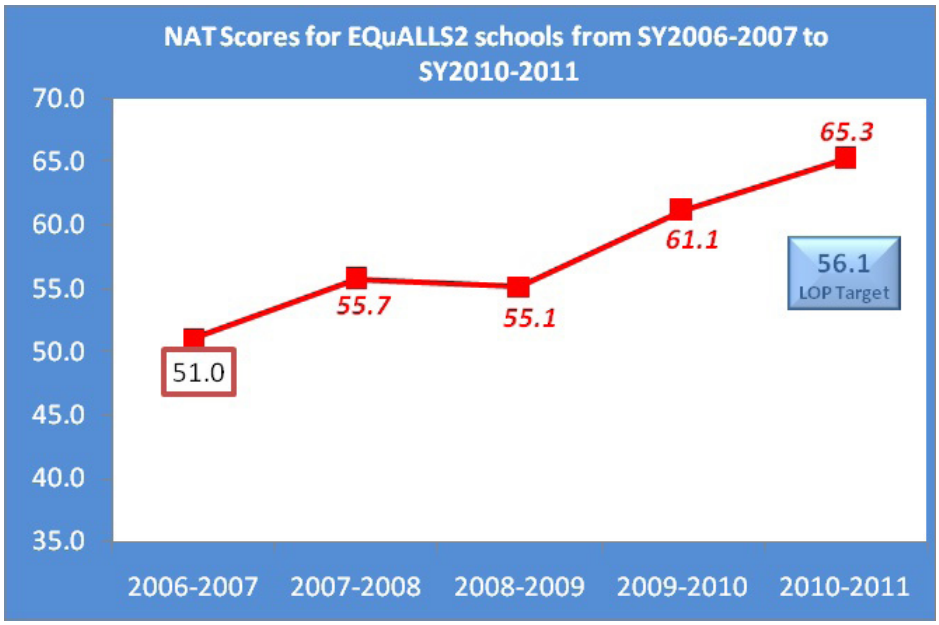


Figure 14: NAT MPS (ESM) for EQuALLS2 schools (SY 2006-2007 to SY 2010-2011

Elementary teachers are better prepared to teach English, math, and science.

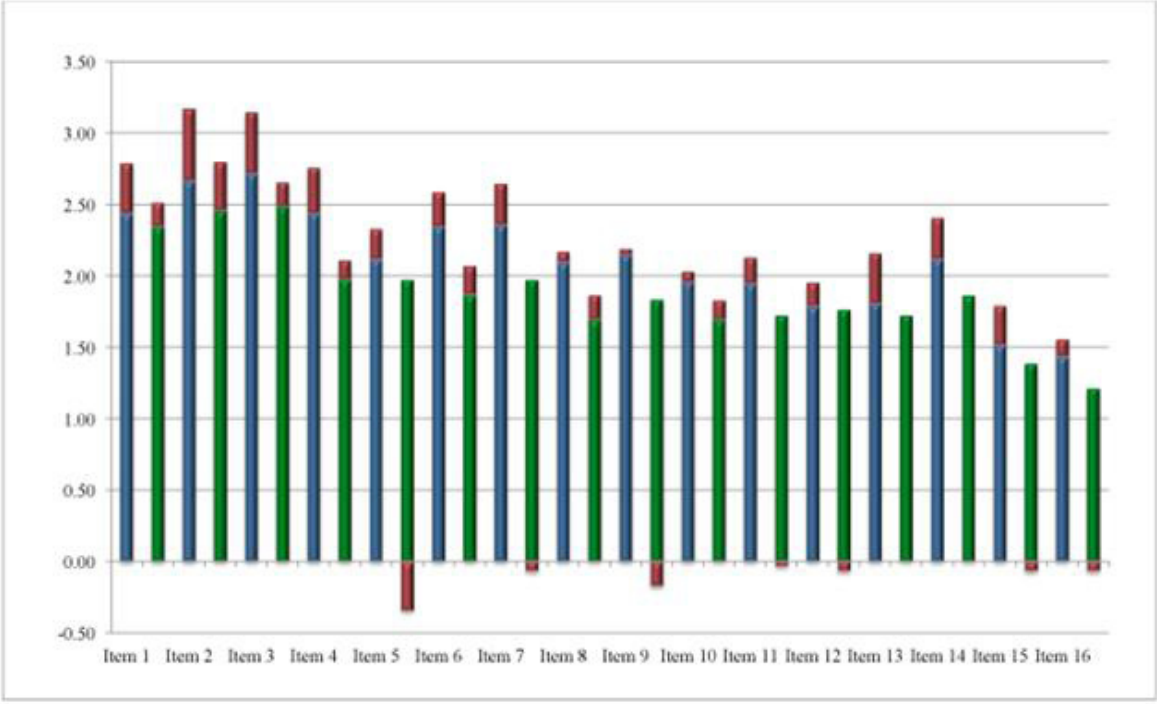
A variety of assessment tools were used to document increases in teachers' content knowledge, proficiency, and improvement in their instructional practices. The Standards-based Observation Protocol for Educators (SCOPE), developed by EDC and adapted for use in the Philippines, was used to capture changes in teachers' instructional practices. SCOPE documents teacher performance on 16 instructional practices, grouped into five categories: classroom management; collaborative and equitable learning environment; student-centered learning environment; relevant, integrated and reflective learning environment; and critical, higher order thinking and problem-solving skills. EQuALLS2-trained teachers demonstrated gains on all 16 practices assessed by the SCOPE, while the comparison group did not. (Figure 15) Overall results indicate that teachers have started to shift from traditional, rote, "chalk and talk" instruction (indicated by scores below 2) toward instructional practices that are student centered and participatory, collaborative and cooperative, active, inquiry-based, relevant and responsive to students' lives and needs, integrated across disciplines and connected to everyday life, focused on higher-order and critical thinking skills, and open-ended problem solving. Specifically:

Additional information about SCOPE, including the 16 instructional practices, is found in Learning Series 5 and 12 at equalls.edc.org (Resources section)

- Instructional practices of English, science, and math learning facilitators showed the most pronounced improvement in the areas

of providing opportunities for students' self-reflection, providing constructive teacher-student and peer feedback, and taking into consideration students' prior knowledge in the lesson design. English, science, and math learning facilitators scored higher than the 3-point benchmark (on a 5-point scale) in classroom management skills and effective use of instruction resources and strategies.

- English, science, and math learning facilitators need to further strengthen their instructional practices on all 16 items assessed by the SCOPE, particularly in the areas of providing students with opportunities to develop problem-solving and higher-order thinking skills and critical thinking skills.



[Legend: Intervention group; Comparison group; Mean gain]

Figure 15: SCOPE results

To document improvement in teachers' content knowledge, EQuALLS2 used standardized assessments developed in the Philippines. The Test of English Proficiency for Teachers (TEPT) of the Department of Education was used to track English proficiency. Science and math diagnostic tests for Grade 6 pupils, developed by the Center for Educational Measurements (CEM), were used in the absence of assessments designed for use with teachers. The sample of teachers assessed pre- and post-interventions were predominantly learning facilitators, a sample group that is not fully representative of the total

population of EQuALLS2 trained teachers. English, math, and science pre-tests were initially administered to identify teachers qualified to become learning facilitators. The post-test was administered to 20% of the total population of teachers who completed two or more core training course; of these, only a third had pre-test scores, thus reducing the pre-post sample size. Post-tests were also administered to a sample of teachers from non-EQuALLS2 schools within the same divisions, matched for income classification, student population, and student performance in the NAT ESM.[25]

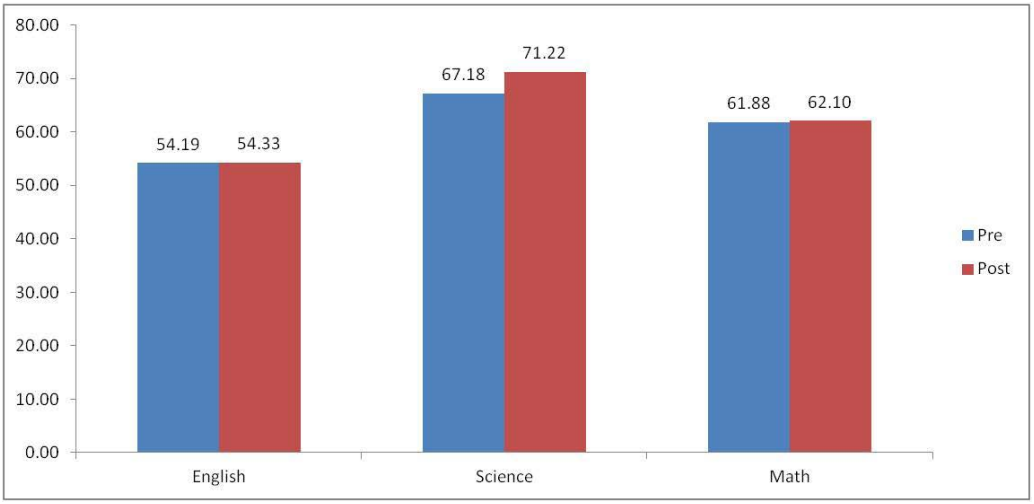


Figure 16: Pre-test and post-test results

The TEPT assesses competency in structure, written expression, and reading comprehension. The sample of teachers assessed on the TEPT showed a statistically insignificant increase from a pre-test mean score of 54.19 to a post-test mean score of 54.33. However, 49% of the teachers tested increased their baseline scores, with 37% demonstrating an increase of 5% or more. The overall mean score of learning facilitators was significantly higher than the non-learning facilitator group. EQuALLS2-trained teachers (n=112) on average scored higher overall in all three competency areas than their counterparts in the non-EQuALLS2 schools (n=121).

The assessment of science knowledge covered the following topics: people, animal, plants and environment, materials, energy, earth, and beyond the solar system. The sample of grades 5–6 teachers with both pre-test and post-test scores demonstrated a significant increase in their overall mean score from 67.18 to 71.22. Of this sample, 59%

25 Final reports by the Center for Educational Measurement and Syrex Corporation provide details on sampling and statistical analyses. Reports are available on request.

increased their baseline mean score, and 55% increased their baseline mean scores by at least 5%. All teachers showed improvement in all the content areas covered in the assessment. Learning facilitators across all grades had significantly higher scores than the non-learning facilitators. In the comparison between EQuALLS2 trained teachers (n=598) and non-EQuALLS2 teachers (n=286), across all grade levels, EQuALLS2 trained teachers' overall performance was significantly higher than their counterparts.

The math assessment covered the following topics: number theory, fractions, decimals, ratio, proportion, percent, geometry and measurement, statistics, and algebra. The sample of grades 5–6 teachers with both pre-test and post-test scores increased their overall mean score from 61.88 to 62.10. The increase is not statistically significant; however, 54% of these teachers increased their baseline scores. Of these, 44% demonstrated an increase of 5% or more from the baseline. Teachers showed improvement in some of the content areas covered in the assessment tool, specifically number theory, fractions, ratio, proportion, percent, and algebra. However, these improvements are not statistically different.

Learning facilitators had significantly higher scores than non-learning facilitators, especially those who were teaching grades 3 to 6 levels. In the comparison between EQuALLS2 trained teachers (n=604) and non-EQuALLs2 teachers (n=330) across all grade levels, EQuALLS2 trained grades 1–2 and 3–4 teachers scored higher than their counterparts in non-EQuALLS2 schools. Grades 5–6 EQuALLS2-trained teachers scored slightly lower; however, the differences were not statistically significant.

As noted earlier in this section, teachers' relatively weak English language skills have been an issue throughout the life of the project. The whole school approach to strengthening reading skills, developed in Year 4, provided an opportunity to understand more about the challenges and gaps in teachers' skills. Assessments of teachers' English reading fluency and comprehension skills were conducted in a small subset of EQuALLS2 schools in each region. Teachers (n = 173) at the Whole School Reading Program sites were assessed using the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and the Oral Reading Fluency Assessment (ORFA).[26] These teachers showed improvement in their reading comprehension skills as measured by the SRI, moving their mean Lexile scores from scores that correspond approximately to grade 4 to scores

26 SRI is a research-based, computer-adaptive, reading assessment program for students in U.S grades K–12 that measures reading comprehension on the Lexile Framework® for Reading. ORFA is a leveled read aloud test that assesses oral reading of connected text in terms of speed, accuracy, and prosody.

that correspond to grade 5. Of these teachers, 42% increased their reading comprehension by one grade level or more. ORFA results showed a statistically insignificant increase. At the pre-test, 40% tested "below basic" level reader; at the post-test, this figure was reduced to 23%. More than half (54%) increased by at least one level in their oral reading fluency skills.

Increasing the level of teachers' proficiency is a continuing challenge, as evidenced by these results in English, math, and science, by the improving but still low skills in reading fluency and comprehension, and by the slow but promising improvements in instructional practices. There is no one explanation for teachers' low scores and slight gains over baseline testing; rather, the possible reasons are multiple and interrelated.

Studies show that teachers need substantial professional development in any given area, around 50 hours or more, to improve their skills.[27] The approximately 50 hours of training for English, science, and math learning facilitators has had a modest impact on the skills of teachers whose skills and knowledge were weak to start with. This argues for increased and sustained in-service professional development (more time on task) as well as for improved teacher induction and preparation programs, an issue outside the scope of EQuALLS2.

The age of teachers seems to have had an impact on test scores. The baseline scores of older teachers were more likely to decline or remain static rather than increase.

The project's organizational design and model of professional development and training may be another contributing factor. The challenges of a centralized model in which training content was "cascaded" or "echoed" to the school level are well-known and were not fully overcome during the period of implementation.

However, standardized assessments alone do not fully capture the impact of professional development on teachers, as evidenced by teachers' reflections and evaluations. For example, WSRP teachers reported having greater self-awareness regarding their reading and writing proficiencies, and this heightened awareness has motivated them to work on improving their skills, model the use of English in their classes, and extend their improved skills into their communities.

Many learning facilitators, such as Jean Pepugal, have improved their

Jean Pepugal has been an English teacher for all grade levels for more than 10 years. After becoming an EQuALLS2-trained learning facilitator, she began sharing student-centered strategies with her learning partners, such as the KWL chart, which helps students identify what they Know, Want to know, and what they Learned. Jean observed, "When I use these strategies…my students become more participative and more interested in learning. I also see that their level of confidence has improved." She also collaborated with four of her co-teachers to conduct a special reading program for non-readers during the 2010–2011 school year.

For a complete write-up on Jean Pepugal, refer to Winners' Folio found at equalls.edc.org (Resources section)

27 Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad. National Staff Development Council. 2009

own teaching and have helped other teachers in their schools through the LPP. In schools with well-developed Learning Partnership Programs, teachers report they have changed. From teachers who worked individually on their lesson plans and who were hesitant to ask other teachers for ideas for fear that they might undermine their reputations and careers, they now see themselves as learning facilitators and learning partners who work together regularly to create lesson plans and make instructional materials. The process allows misconceptions about ESM topics to be corrected and learning materials to be used appropriately.

Number of educators using educational technologies

To track the number of educators using educational technologies, a pre-survey was administered to all the teachers who attended the Basic ICT training (adjusted n=786) and a post-survey was administered to the same group 3–12 months after their training. In both surveys, teachers were asked "do you use the computer for any school-related work?"

In the pre-survey, only 30% responded "yes" to using the computer for school-related work. In the post-survey, this percentage increased to 86%. In the post-survey, respondents indicated they use computers as follows: 60%: type and complete DepED reports, 56%: look up information, 37%: create visual aids, 27%: calculate grades, 18%: type lesson plans, and 13%: other, which included surfing the internet, using e-mail, etc. It is interesting to note the increase in the number of respondents who say they type their lesson plans using the computer (from 22 to 110), and who say they record and calculate their class records using the computer (from 23 to 176).

During focus group discussions conducted side by side with the administration of the post-survey, the majority of the teachers expressed their appreciation for their new computer skills. And 28% reported purchasing their own computer or laptop after completing ICT training. Overall, the trained ICT learning facilitators reported mentoring almost 1,500 other teachers in ICT.

"Among the learning Ms. Lozarita gained, what she appreciated most is the use of internet; downloading instructional videos and pictures; printing of teaching materials and workbooks for the pupils; and, printing of test papers. Now, her life is different. The ICT training has changed Ms. Lozarita's life: she bought a laptop and Globe tattoo and she gained friends through YM, Facebook, and others."

– Daisy Delfin (right), ICT-trained teacher on Ms. Juvy Lozarita (left), whom she tutored on how to use the computer. New Lambunao ES, Tantangan

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Ongoing access to professional development is now present at EQuALLS2 sites and in the Department of Education at all levels, from fully supported, project-initiated approaches with clearly identified funding sources to widely circulated policy memos. Just as significant is the increased awareness and initiative of teachers, especially among the learning facilitators, to take charge of their own professional growth and to invest time and effort in becoming more effective teachers.
Over the course of the project, the educator professional development

component of EQuALLS2 underwent changes and enhancements. The lessons learned by project partners may be useful in future educational improvement initiatives. The key lessons are included here.

Testing student's reading abilities using eEGRA

Implementing a clear and focused strategy to improve the reading skills of students and teachers may lead to stronger learner outcomes in all subjects. During the past five years, EQuALLS2 collaborated on or led efforts to improve the English reading, writing and speaking skills of elementary students and their teachers. Through a partnership with DepEd's National English Proficiency Program, we adapted a secondary school-focused English mentoring program for use in elementary schools. Collaboration with the Australian AID-funded Basic Education Assistance to Mindanao (BEAM) project led to development of a reading program for the early grades in the ARMM. However, neither program demonstrated the quick and promising results that have been demonstrated by taking a whole school approach to strengthening reading skills. Providing all elementary teachers with evidence-based strategies for teaching reading while raising awareness of their own English language reading abilities is a promising strategy; and will be the main focus of the no cost extension work.

School-based professional development requires investment of time and resources at each level of the education system in order to strengthen the skills of all teachers. The process of building school-level expertise for ongoing professional development is indeed a challenging one. Like other educational development projects, EQuALLS2 was constantly faced with the challenge of reaching large target numbers while guaranteeing depth and quality of professional development offerings. The decision to implement a centralized and standardized training curriculum for school-based learning facilitators, dependent on the skills and expertise of regional and district trainers to implement, resulted in some trade-offs. The curriculum was developed by national consultants from the University of the Philippines and the Philippines Department of Education, which ensured their investment in the immediate outcomes and in longer-term sustainability. Faculty members from local Teacher Education Institutions (TEI) were trained by national master trainers/experts to be the regional training facilitators for local learning facilitators. This provided TEI faculty with insights into the gaps in the subject-matter knowledge and instructional practices of teachers educated by TEIs. These insights are helping refine and reform the pre-service courses offered to current teachers-in-training.

In strengthening the skills level of the better performing teachers to become the go-to experts, or learning facilitators, the needs of the least skilled teachers were not addressed directly. EQuALLS2 found that

even the better skilled teachers needed substantial time to improve their content knowledge and teaching strategies as well as time and support to become effective coaches and mentors. As a consequence, in general, the lesser skilled teachers did not receive the benefit of direct training by the more experienced facilitators from TEIs and DepEd, and were involved in professional development activities for fewer hours.

Lead implementing partners and EDC addressed this gap through intensified district level workshops and project initiatives, such as the Whole School Reading Program and the ICT Program. By providing direct training to all teachers in a school on reading instruction, WSRP attempted to equalize the level of skills and knowledge of all teachers with regard to reading instruction, and positive results for students were achieved. The EQuALLS2 ICT program provided direct ICT training to several teachers in a school or district, rather than relying on only one trained ICT learning facilitator per school to "spread" the know-how. Expanding the pool of trained ICT teachers (100 per municipality or about 40%–45% of the total number of teachers in a municipality) greatly increased the likelihood that skills would be retained and transferred, creating more of a "viral effect" among the other teachers in a school.

The scalability of direct training models is an important consideration for resource-strapped education systems, both in terms of time and cost effectiveness. In the long run, a direct training model of professional development, perhaps supplemented by distance technologies, may prove to be more cost effective, with higher skill retention and increased likelihood of teachers investing in their own growth and development.

Strengthening teachers' subject-matter expertise and helping them develop a wider range of effective instructional practices go hand-in-hand. Previous professional development courses offered to teachers in Regions 9, 12, and the ARMM, through other donor-supported initiatives, had focused more on instructional approaches and strategies than on subject-matter content. EQuALLS2 core training in English, math, and science was designed primarily to strengthen teachers' content knowledge and to help teachers better address specific competencies in the Philippines Basic Education Curriculum. While good instructional practices were modeled by master trainers during the train-the-trainer courses, and by regional trainers during local training of learning facilitators, explicit training sessions for learning facilitators in instructional practices came later. More intentional and earlier integration of instructional strategies and approaches into content-focused professional development with the 16 instructional practices identified by SCOPE may have produced stronger results.

Donated books and materials can effectively enhance teacher training and classroom instruction when distribution is based on demand-driven strategies. Often, well-meaning programs donate books and materials to schools where textbooks and basic teaching-learning materials are in short supply, and these materials are not used because they are not relevant or appropriate, they are thought to be "too good" to be used and remain locked up, or teachers are not familiar with the material. By creating demand for these materials, through book fairs where teachers review and select books, and by providing workshops for teachers on how to use supplementary books as effective resources, the project successfully integrated donated books into program implementation, distributing over 2.1 million donated books and teaching resources into the hands of teachers and students.

INTERMEDIATE RESULT 3 (IR3):

Improved relevance of education and training for out-of-school children and youth

Approach

Increased Access to Learning for Out-of-School Children and Youth
Increased participation by out-of-school children and youth in non-formal basic education and workforce development offerings is recognized by government actors at the national, regional, and local levels in the Philippines—along with USAID's Education Strategy (2011–2015)—as playing a critical role in ensuring enhanced economic opportunities and decreased social exclusion for conflict-affected youth.

This approach reflects best practices internationally—where there is a growing awareness of the need to develop flexible and dynamic basic education, technical skills training, and work readiness interventions for children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds who are pushed out of formal education (at the primary, secondary, or tertiary levels) because of inflexible offerings that conflict with their household economic survival activities, and do not reflect disadvantaged youth's need to blend and balance learning and earning activities.

Under Intermediate Result 3 (IR3), the EQuALLS2 project was mandated to significantly expand the participation of out-of-school children and youth (OSCY) in Muslim Mindanao in relevant and accessible non-formal basic education and workforce-oriented technical skills training offerings.

EQuALLS2 approach consisted of a coordinated set of actions that focused on the following:

Removing Barriers to Access – Accomplished by increasing the diversity of non-formal education and technical skills training offerings available to out-of-school children and youth, including:

- Courses at **every level of pre-existing skills**, including those for youth with limited literacy skills, along with those for youth already active in a given trade who needed short doses of technical skills upgrading and immediately applicable work readiness skills in areas such as teamwork, problem solving, and workplace communication

- Courses of **different intensities and durations** that allowed participants to acquire new knowledge and skills at a pace that matched

Global Best Practices

The Youth Livelihood Development Guide *(2008) developed by the USAID-funded EQUIP3 initiative provides an excellent overview of the principles and practices that drive successful workforce development and non-formal education programs for at-risk youth globally.*

USAID's Mindanao Jobs for the 21st Century Report *(2007) provides an account of the constraints faced by out-of-school youth and their households prior to the start of EQ2.*

Both documents can be downloaded from www.EQUIP3.org.

their existing work commitments (and thus did not exclude economically active youth from poor households)

- Courses offered in **diverse locations**, such as remote communities without existing education infrastructure and conflict-affected communities where government teachers and skills trainers were traditionally unwilling to work

- Courses with **diverse content areas** that allowed the project to respond to local realities and market demand by providing youth with a wide range of options

Addressing Quality and Relevance – Accomplished by increasing the capacity of government and non-governmental non-formal education and technical skills training entities to adapt and enhance existing instructional approaches and curriculums by doing the following:

- Building the **capacity of Instructional Managers** (IM's) to make full use of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) approach and resources, with a particular focus on improving learner's composition writing skills and their re-engagement with community resources. ALS is a non-formal education approach, established by the Department of Education, which consists of non-formal learning modules for classes at various levels and a national examination system. It aims to upgrade basic education skills of people outside of the formal school system and provides successful completers with equivalency credentials at the primary or secondary levels—creating pathways back into formal learning or supporting entry into the workforce.

- Incorporating **post-training support** for graduates of non-formal education and technical skills training so they could identify and access local opportunities in employment, self-employment, and continuing education. An example is the entrepreneurship training that Save the Children pioneered (and that other partners followed) for completers of WFD trainings to start small business enterprises to apply their new and/or enhanced skills.

- Tracking the **application of new and improved knowledge and skills** via innovative monitoring and evaluation tools, such as the Developmental Assets Profile (DAP) and the Livelihood Activity Report (LAR).

- Setting common standards for EQuALLS2 basic education and workforce development trainings that aligned with both government policies and practices, and with global best practices in work-

Available IR3 Toolkits

Two of the most widely applicable IR3 toolkits include:

*1. **The Livelihood Activity Report (LAR) Toolkit** – Designed to help basic education and technical skills courses track the application of new knowledge and skills across a wide range of formal and informal economic activities*

*2. **The Developmental Assets Profile (DAP) Toolkit** – Equips education and skills training courses with the ability to track their contribution to broader youth and community development outcomes*

Both are available at equalls.edc.org (Resources section)

readiness credentialing.

Mitigating Constraints to Sustainability – Accomplished by ensuring that new programmatic building blocks and cross-cutting resources applied to or developed under EQuALLS2 were introduced in close collaboration with local government and non-government actors, and that they were made available for them to adopt, adapt, or appropriate. This was done on an ongoing basis via the following:

- Ongoing **consultative forums** and **technical working group** sessions designed to solicit the input of key local actors at each stage in project (design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation) to reach consensus and to increase synergies throughout implementation.

- Joint training and **capacity-building initiatives** where staff from government and non-governmental organizations and other education and youth stakeholders were introduced to new programmatic building blocks, tools, and approaches modeled by EQuALLS2, and had the opportunity to develop hands-on skills in their application with a wide range of local programs. An example is the capacity that local organizations and universities were able to build in OSCY programming and monitoring approaches, as part of the Consuelo Alliance and under the leadership of IYF/ELSA during EQuALLS2.

- The development and dissemination of resources, including a series of briefers, handbooks, and toolkits that support the ongoing use of new tools and approaches

Principal Components

EQuALLS2 lead implementing partners and key local service providers worked together to deliver non-formal basic education and technical skills training interventions at scale to over 100,000 out-of-school children and youth across Muslim Mindanao. These offerings were clustered in three main domains:

Non-formal basic education offerings – These offerings drew upon the Department of Education's Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS) materials and methodologies, and a network of locally supported Community Learning Centers (CLC's), to support the delivery of a diverse range of basic education courses by EQuALLS2 hired Instructional Managers (IM's), including the following:

- **Basic Literacy (BL) courses** – Provided 36,643 learners with the opportunity to develop the practical reading and writing skills that generated immediate benefits to existing livelihood activities. At the same time, they helped extend and expand pathways in employ-

More on ALS

For more information about the Alternative Learning System (ALS) see the website www.deped.gov.ph

ment, self-employment, and household-linked economic activities, and also created opportunities for completers to enroll in higher level basic education and skills training courses.

- **Philippine Education Placement Test (PEPT) courses** – Designed to prepare 8,710 younger learners interested in re-entering formal education to take the PEPT, which determines the grade level to which learners could return within the formal school system.

- **Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) courses** – Offered 25,620 learners the opportunity to prepare to earn an elementary or high school equivalency certificate, granted by DepED through the A&E national test, which would allow them to pursue higher levels of formal education, including tertiary levels and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) courses.

Workforce development trainings – Built upon the capacity and experience of the Technical Education Skills Development Authority (TESDA), TESDA centers, TESDA-certified, community-based training centers, as well as other specialized service providers to offer a diverse range of courses, clustered around the following:

- TESDA traditional trade areas: construction; health, social and community development services; processed food and beverages, metals, and engineering; automotive; electronics; garments; information and technology; footwear and leather goods; furniture and fixtures

- Agriculture and fisheries-related trades: rubber technology, fish processing, seaweed farming technology and production, plant propagation technology, animal raising, etc.

- Entrepreneurship: offered as a separate component and also embedded in other trainings

- Capacity building of local manpower: courses for youth from remote or conflict-affected communities to become TESDA-certified trainers and assessors and then expand access to TESDA course offerings in their home areas

More on TESDA

For more on TESDA see the website www.tesda.gov.ph.

Cross-Cutting Work Readiness and Post Training Support – Integrated into all of IR3's Basic Education and TESDA workforce development offerings. These components provided linkages to local employment and self-employment opportunities (including the formation of "business guilds" made up of project graduates and supported—with tools, work space, and working capital—by local government units).

More on Work Readiness

For more on EQ2 Work Readiness see

The Next Phase: Credentialing Work Readiness Knowledge and Skills – A White Paper by EDC-EQuALLS2, at equalls.edc.org (Resources section)

They also helped to maximize opportunities for participants to extend and enhance their existing household and self-employment economic activities, and access new ones via improvements to the knowledge, skills, and accompaniment participants needed to seize opportunities in the local market economy.

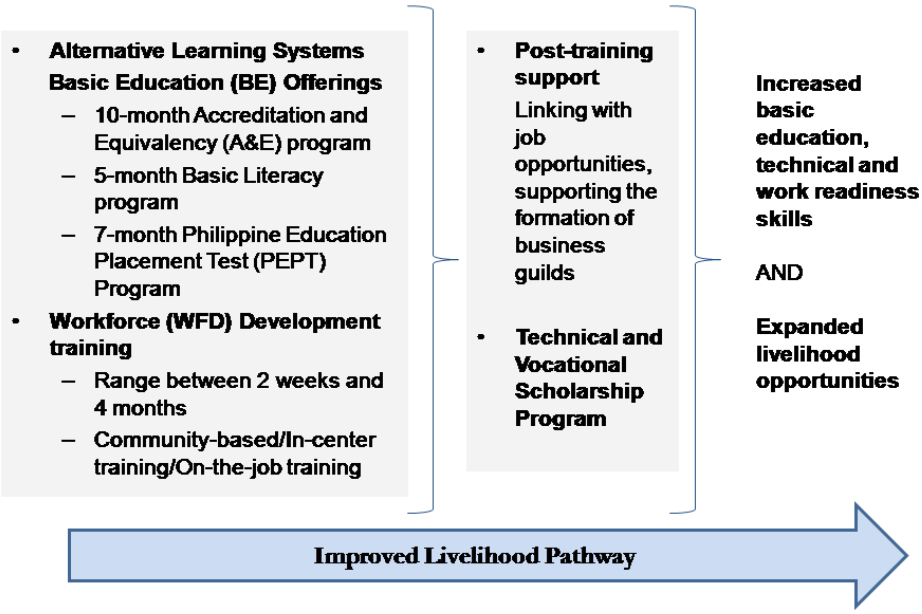


Figure 17: IR3 interventions

As can be seen in Figure 17, IR3 interventions were designed to engage learners from their existing starting point and then provide them with a range of options to make steady progress (sometimes via participation in more than one sequential offering) towards the accumulation of increased basic education, technical skills, and work-readiness competencies, along with expanded opportunities to apply these to local market-driven opportunities within employment, self-employment, and/or household-based economic activities.

Project Deliverables

EQuALLS2's overarching approach to increasing access to learning for out-of-school children and youth (OSCY) consisted of (a) removing barriers to access and (b) addressing quality and relevance. This section of the report focuses on project deliverables with regards to removing barriers to education access for OSCY. It presents the reach and scale of EQuALLS2 Basic Education and Workforce Development (WFD) trainings for OSCY in Mindanao and describes characteristics of the children and youth reached. It also tracks the pathways that they took within and among program offerings.

A. Targets and Accomplishments – Reach and Scale of OSCY programming

The key indicators of reach for the OSCY program component are listed in Table 6. As shown, accomplishments over-reached targets.

Table 6. IR3 FACTS Indicators- targets and accomplishments

Indicators	Targets	Accomplishments	% Accomplished
Number of OSCY enrolled in USG-funded Basic Education programs	70,000	71,198	102%
Number of OSCY enrolled in USG-funded Workforce Development (WFD) Trainings	35,000	43,960	126%
Number of Community Learning Centers (CLCs) repaired for the use of Basic Education programs	400	571	143%

Reach and Scale

a. Number of OSCY Served – Reaching Scale

EQuALLS2 was tasked to provide services to 105,000 out-of-school children and youth (OSCY) between the ages of 12 and 24 in Mindanao. Throughout the life of the project, a total of 115,158 training opportunities were delivered to OSCY, with some youth participating in more than one training.

As can be seen in Figure 18, to reach such a large scale, EQuALLS2 followed a systematically scaled-up approach to service delivery. EQuALLS2 started with a strategic transition period in Year 1, during which a relatively small cohort of 14,800 OSCY were served while outreach, programming, and assessment systems were refined. Once the approach across sites and implementing partners became more consistent, and partnerships at the community and government were fully strengthened, EQuALLS2 reached greater scale, with its peak in Years 3 and 4, providing 26,018 and 36,797 trainings, respectively. In Year 5, a focus on evaluation, documentation, and dissemination of lessons learned took center stage, and service delivery was gradually scaled back to 20,011 in total.

It should be noted that WFD offerings display a steeper growth curve than BE offerings because EQuALLS2 encountered greater demand for WFD trainings than originally anticipated, and we adjusted the program by increasing WFD offerings significantly in Years 3 and 4.

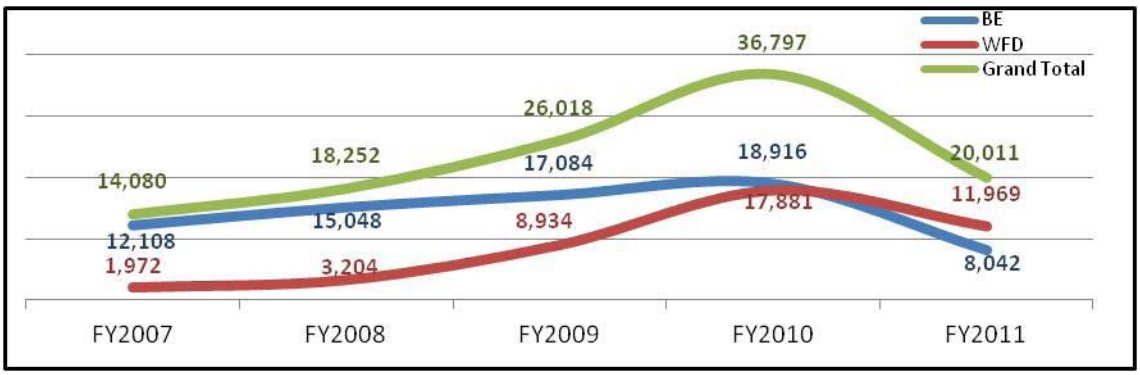


Figure 18: IR3 interventions continuum

b. Profile of OSCY in EQuALLS2: How Diverse Were Our Learners?

Looking beyond the absolute numbers of reach, an analysis of participant data allows us to segment beneficiaries by geographic location, gender, and age, as shown below:

- In terms of geographical location, about half of OSCY served lived in ARMM, and the other half was distributed almost equally between Regions 9 and 12. (Figure 19) This breakdown is consistent with the original program design and stakeholder consultations during the project's design that emphasized greater need in ARMM.

- The gender breakdown of 61% males and 39% females may seem too male focused at first. (Figure 20) However, this breakdown is representative of the out-of-school population since DepEd statistics show that there is greater school dropout among males than females, which leads to out-of-school populations being predominantly male. Gender breakdown by program offering shows WFD offerings with slightly higher male representation (65%) than BE offerings (58%).

- Analysis of participants' age shows that more than half (65%) of participants in BE offerings were in the younger age brackets (12–18 years), while the majority of participants in WFD offerings were in the older age bracket (19–24 years). This is because as participants grow older (from 12 to 19), their financial obligations increase (due to poverty, early marriage, etc.), and so they lean more towards WFD than BE offerings.

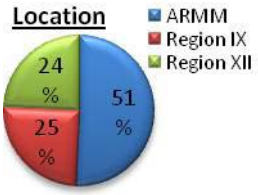


Figure 19. Geographic distribution

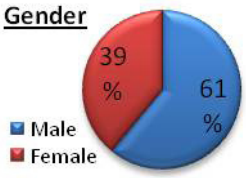


Figure 20. Gender distribution

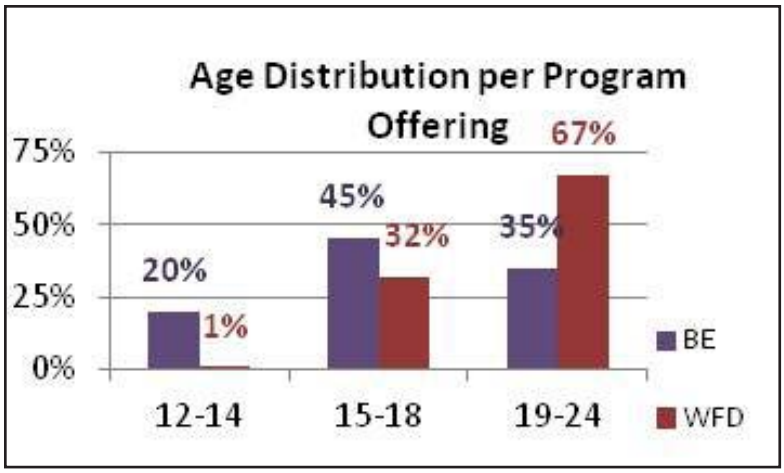


Figure 21. Age distribution per program offering

Further analysis of the Livelihood Activity Report (LAR) reveals that:

- Out-of-school children and youth were already involved in a wide range of livelihood activities when they entered the EQuALLS2 programs, and needed to balance time spent on these existing contributions to household economic survival with time dedicated to their new basic education and workforce development activities.
- Most participants had to juggle four or more such activities, which together made up a diverse portfolio of part-time or seasonal employment, self-employment, and household-based economic activities.
- Graduating learners typically increased the diversity and intensity of their livelihood activities, adding new areas of work to their existing portfolio of livelihood pursuits.

Together, this participant profile data demonstrates EQuALLS2's success in ensuring the relevance and accessibility of its offerings to a diverse range of out-of-school children and youth, and highlights the importance of the project's focus on flexible offerings.

c. Participants' Pathways

Table 7. WFD participants receiving more than one intervention

No. of Interventions	No. of youth	% out of WFD completers
2	9,520	33%
3	803	3%
4 or more	533	2%
Total:	10,856	37%

EQuALLS2's flexible approach to programming for out-of-school youth allowed participants to access initial services via either WFD

or BE trainings and then proceed to another offering upon successful completion of the first.

An analysis of the number of interventions each participant enrolled in shows that the majority of participants in WFD trainings (63%) participated in only one training. As many as 10,856 (or 37%) of participants enrolled in two or more trainings (see Table 7)—either by progressing from lower to higher levels of certification in a particular trade area, or by acquiring skills in different yet related trade areas (e.g. carpentry and building wiring). An analysis of participants' pathways shows that there were no cases of participants starting with a WFD training and continuing with BE trainings. But a large number of participants (2,964) who completed BE trainings joined WFD trainings afterwards.

d. Repair of Community Learning Centers (CLCs) – Removing Barriers to Access

Part of the strategy to removing barriers to access involved the identification and repair of community-based spaces that could serve either as classrooms for BE courses or, in some exceptional cases, as spaces for WFD trainings. EQuALLS2 committed to repairing 400 CLCs so that they could serve as adequate educational spaces. This allowed trainings to take place in local communities. It also helped the project to avoid costs and risks associated with transporting students out of their communities. Repairs were carried out in consultation with local communities, government units, and educators and trainers, who made significant in-kind contributions in the form of labor, materials, and equipment.

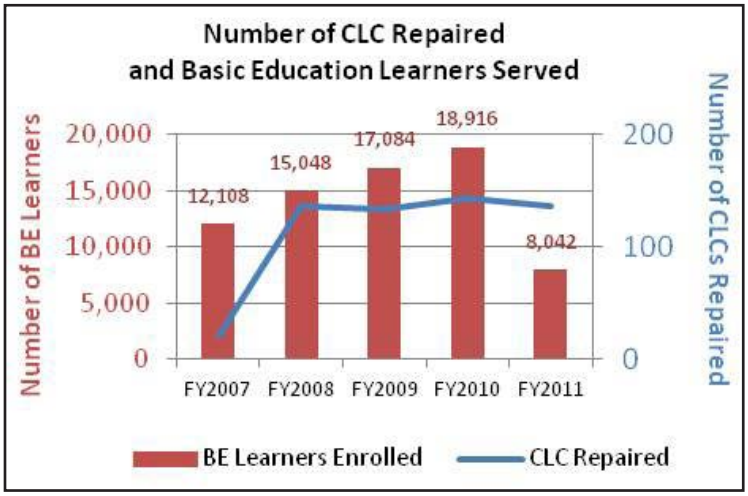


Figure 22. Number of CLC repaired and Basic Education learners served

Figure 22 displays the number of BE learners (red bars with left axis) and the number of CLCs repaired (blue line with right axis) each year of the project. It shows that while BE offerings increased in Years 2, 3, and 4, the number of CLCs repaired were also high (ranging between 133 and 143). In contrast, Year 1 shows lower number of CLCs repaired (21) in relation to the number of BE learners. The reason is that Year 1 learners benefitted from CLCs repaired during EQuALLS1, while at the same time, systems and plans were put in place to repair CLCs in communities not served under EQuALLS1. Year 5, on the other hand, shows the opposite scenario, high numbers of CLCs repaired in relation to the number of BE learners. This is a result of sustainability measures initiated in order to ensure the post-EQuALLS2 usability in communities where local government units made commitments to continuing to use CLCs for educational purposes.

Aside from repairing the CLCs, learning materials such as modules and supplementary books were also provided to the learners. The CLC monitoring tool that was used by the project to check the conditions of CLCs also tracked the number of CLCs using teaching and resource materials. Out of the 88 CLCs monitored that had ongoing BE classes in FY2010 and FY2011, 68 (77%) had modules available for the learners to use.

Adjustments and Enhancements

In many aspects, implementation of the OSCY program component followed the original design—especially in terms of core program components offered (BE and WFD) and the overall geographical spread across target regions. In some aspects, however, the IR3 component underwent significant adjustments and enhancements, based, typically, on results from ongoing monitoring and mid-term review exercises. This led to shifts in the overall mix of courses offered to help EQuALLS2 better reach the target population, and improve the overall quality of offerings. These changes included the following:

- The WFD program mix changed by both significantly increasing WFD targets and including more short-term courses. This change responded to a greater demand for WFD trainings than originally anticipated. It also reflected the need to adjust the program mix to widen the menu of WFD offerings and to increase the number of short-term targeted skills courses that better matched the limited time many OSCY could spend away from existing livelihood commitments.

- The BE program mix also evolved by discontinuing PEPT trainings and placing greater emphasis on other BE offerings. This occurred

because during the first two years of implementation, it became evident that returning to formal schooling was not necessarily the main goal of the target population—many of whom were more interested in upgrading their basic literacy and numeracy skills in order to access immediate livelihood opportunities. The PEPT, which was geared to and focused on re-entry to formal schooling, was found to be a poor fit for the target population; thus, it was discontinued. Instead, Basic Literacy and A&E at the elementary and secondary levels were emphasized. Thus, Basic Literacy became the major intervention of Synergeia Foundation, while Save the Children and IYF/ELSA concentrated on A&E elementary and secondary levels.

- The addition of a Scholarship Program (SP) to the program mix – The SP was introduced in Year 4 to offer high achieving participants greater opportunities in their livelihood pathways, either by further strengthening their WFD skills (via higher levels of certification) or via entry into tertiary level degree programs.

- Increased emphasis on female participation – Although it had been established that out-of-school populations are predominantly male, there was still a consensus across partners to increase levels of female participation. Measures taken included outreach strategies, selection of WFD program offerings that appealed to female learners, and one-on-one follow-up with female participants. This resulted in a 6 percentage-point increase of overall female participation throughout the project.

Project Impact

While the previous section of this report focused on project deliverables based on participant enrollment and CLC repair figures linked to removing barriers to educational access among OSCY, this section focuses on the outcomes and impacts of the project's Basic Education and Workforce Development offerings for OSCY.

EQuALLS2 tracked impact in terms of the depth, quality, and relevance of program interventions, along with the project's contributions to decreasing the social isolation of out-of-school populations. More specifically:

- *Depth* refers to the degree to which participants' improved competencies and skills in both Basic Education (BE) and Workforce Development (WFD) knowledge and skill areas.

- *Quality* refers to improved program quality through enhanced capacity of educators in the non-formal sector.

- *Relevance* is determined by the degree in which participants applied their new or enhanced skills, along with results of a tracer analysis of the education and formal employment status of a sample of participants several months or years after program completion.

- The project's contribution to decreasing social isolation relates to results from the use of Search Institute's Developmental Assets Profile (DAP) survey tool to compare participants' internal and external assets at the start and completion of their EQuALLS2 program.

Depth – How much learning took place: Participants' completion rates and improved competencies

a. Completion rates track each program offering's ability to maintain participants' interest and engagement throughout a course cycle. Results show that for both BE and WFD programs overall completion rate was 81%. Analysis by year (see Table 8 below) shows that completion rates ranged between 77% and 86% in BE offerings and between 78% and 90% in WFD offerings. This is a relatively high completion rate, throughout the years, considering that all participants had a previous history of disengaging from formal schooling.

Completion rates within BE courses increased steadily across the project's five years—consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that this is a result of the project's focus on improving the relevance and accessibility of course offerings. This included a focus on flexible hours and the use of home visits to build a strong connection with individual learners. It also involved improving retention rates by embedding community service and sports initiatives within BE interventions, as modeled by International Youth Foundation/ELSA Consuelo interventions, which were seen to be a way of building enhanced commitment to learning. It also proved effective for increased learner commitment and retention rates to actively engage local government units and officials in the operationalization of activities as demonstrated by Synergeia Foundation.

On the other hand, completion rates within WFD offerings decreased somewhat over the course of the project. It is suspected that this may have been a result of the much faster scaling up of WFD offerings—where WFD enrollees almost tripled in number between Years 2 and 3, and then again, doubled in Year 4. (Table 8) All of which impacted WFD service providers' ability to provide the same level of individual supports and follow-up.

Table 8. Completion rate by year

	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Basic Education (BE)				
# of enrollees	15,048	7,084	18,916	8,042
# of completers	11,611	13,233	16,205	6,950
Overall: 81%	77%	77%	86%	86%
Workforce Development (WFD)				
# of enrollees	3,204	8,934	17,881	11,969
# of completers	2,898	7,491	13,987	9,506
Overall: 81%	90%	84%	78%	79%

* Note: Data includes completion rates for Years 2–5; Year 1 was devoted to planning, enhancing design, and tracking enrollments.

b. Improved competencies – Among those who completed the programs, a set of pre-test and post-test results for BE interventions and assessments for certification for WFD interventions were used to gauge the direct impact on participants' competencies.

For BE offerings, EQuALLS2 used two existing and well-established DepED-BALS tests (see sidebar) to measure the participants' basic skills when they started (pre) and then again when they completed (post) the program. Of a representative sample of 362 participants randomly selected (out of a cohort of 6,131 completers of BL and A&E programs in FY2010), 359 valid results were analyzed, representing all three implementing partners across project sites. Results show that:

- 99% of BL and 89% of A&E learners progressed to a higher literacy level (excluding learners who started already at the highest possible level at pre-test).
- As displayed in the Table 9 below, 97% of all learners showed an increase in raw scores from pre-test to post-test. And, 79% of learners showed at least a 10% increase (if not more) in raw scores from pre-test to post-test.

Assessment for Basic Literacy (ABL) was used for Basic Literacy Program (BLP) trainings.

It consists of 3 levels:
- *Non-literate (0–30)*
- *Neo-literate (31–60)*
- *Post-literate (61–100)*

Functional Literacy Test (FLT) was used for Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) trainings.

It consists of 4 levels:
- *Basic Level (0– 9)*
- *Lower Elementary (10–14)*
- *Advance Elementary (15–18)*
- *Secondary Level (19 & above)*

Table 9. Test results of Basic Education completers

EQ2 Project	Sample (Test Takers)	Improved by Level (*)	% Improved by Level (*)	Improved by Raw Score	% Improved by Raw Score	Improved Raw Score by 10%	% Improved Raw Score by 10%
BL	247	218	99%	242	98%	227	92%
A&E	112	25	89%	107	96%	58	52%
Grand Total	359	243	94%	349	97.21%	285	79%

(*) Percentage figures on improvement by level are calculated based on the total number of learners who scored below the highest possible level at pre-test. Learners who started at the highest possible level at pre-test are excluded from this calculation because they did not have a higher level to progress to.

For WFD offerings, EQuALLS2 used TESDA certifications as an indicator of improved competencies. TESDA certification is granted to trainees following a rigorous assessment conducted by TESDA trained and certified assessors. The assessment for a National Certificate (NC) includes theory and practice tests addressing the three main competencies categorized as basic skills (related to developing effective relationships), common skills (related to the use and operation of devices, equipment, tools, and facilities in the workplace), and core skills (technical hard skills specific to the chosen trade area). Participants who do not qualify for NC certification may receive a Certificate of Competency (COC) granted on specific competencies that they passed during the assessment.

Results throughout the project show that 37% of trainees who underwent assessment received NC certification or a COC stating the specific competencies that they successfully accomplished. Project trends showed that most trainees passed common and basic competencies, but they were challenged by core competencies. This is because the assessment includes oral, written, and demonstration exams, and it requires trainees to pass all core competencies; otherwise, they are not recommended for national certification. Historically, the main reason for relatively low NC certification rates in EQuALLS2 and TESDA is the rigorous nature of the assessment that requires trainees to pass all three competency areas in order to receive a National Certificate (NC). The NC certification is a relatively new measure adopted by TESDA around the same year that EQuALLS2 started. It has been gradually applied to the different trade areas, and refinements and improvements to this certification are still a focus and priority of TESDA. While an NC certificate is recognized every year by more private businesses when making hiring decisions, project data shows that youth who participated in EQuALLS2 trainings but may not have earned an NC certificate were

still able to move forward in their livelihood path. This is demonstrated by the results of the DAP and the LAR (in other sections of this report) showing that EQuALLS2 participants gained valuable skills and that they are applying those skills in a variety of livelihood activities.

Quality – Improved program quality through enhanced capacity of educators

EQuALLS2 addressed quality through capacity building of educators in the non-formal education sector, under the premise that enhanced educators' capacity will contribute to improved programming, not only within EQuALLS2 but also after the project, leaving a pool of better qualified educators to serve out-of-school populations.

Improved capacity of Instructional Managers (IMs), who are educators in the non-formal education sector, was measured with the Instructional Managers' Professional Development Tracking (IMPDT) tool. This tool was developed during the first half of the project in close partnership with implementing partners, IMs, DepED-BALS representatives, and technical advisors. It is closely aligned to the basic and enhancement trainings run by DepED-BALS and adopted by EQuALLS2. It was designed mainly for professional growth purposes rather than for supervision.

Results are based on a sample of 159 IMs. The IMPDT tool was administered twice (baseline and final) to each IM over a period of 5–12 months, during which IMs received basic and enhancement trainings and conducted BL or A&E trainings for OSCYs.

- 81% of IMs experienced a positive change in their capacity, rating higher at the time of final assessment compared to baseline.
- 63% of IMs moved to a higher level or were already at the highest possible level at baseline. Specifically, 52% moved to a higher level; 35% stayed at the same level; 11% were already at the highest level at baseline; and only 2% displayed a negative change (moving to a lower level in the final assessment).

Figure 23. IM's average scores by category over time

The Instructional Managers' Professional Development Tracking (IMPDT) tool is a self-assessment tool that measures improvement along a continuum, starting with a beginner level and continuing with intermediate, advance, and expert levels. It tracks improvement across 17 competencies, which were reinforced during basic and enhancement trainings of IMs under EQuALLS2. These competencies are clustered in three categories: Instruction, Administration, and Coordination, which represent the various roles that IMs play in the delivery of programs in a non-formal education setting. (Visit equalls.edc.org (Resources section) for a copy of the two-page IMPDT tool.)

- Capacity growth took place across all the three competency categories. As shown in Figure 23, greatest growth was registered in the Instruction category, which includes competencies directly addressed in IM trainings that EQuALLS2 delivered as part of its educators' capacity development initiative.

Relevance – Application of new or enhanced skills and education and formal employment status of participants after the program

a. Application of skills – The extent to which participants applied new or enhanced skills addressed through EQuALLS2 trainings speaks for the relevance of such skills in their immediate environment and the impact of the project in enhancing and broadening participants' economic opportunities.

The application of skills was measured with the Livelihood Activity Report (LAR), a self-reported tool designed to measure the frequency and degree in which participants are applying new and/or enhanced livelihood skills. The LAR was developed during the first half of the project in close partnership with implementing partners, trainers, learners, the private sector, and, most importantly, TESDA and DepED-BALS. This collaborative work helped align the LAR with the governing institutions for vocational, technical, and alternative basic education. It also helped ensure its relevance with the local context. As a result, the LAR identifies four livelihood skills: (1) development of self, (2) communication skills, (3) problem solving and critical thinking, and (4) work habits. And, it examines the application of skills in six categories of economic activities (see side bar).

LAR's Main Categories of Economic Activities:

1. Help at home

2. Planting, harvesting, raising animals, fishing

3. Buying and selling

4. Carpentry, welding, construction, electrical

5. Tricycle, motorcycle, massage and beauty care, repair services

6. Making things to sell (food, crafts)

Two rounds of data were collected by each implementing partner in Years 3–5. The total sample included 3,223 participants: 27% from BE programs and 73% from WFD trainings; 57% living in mainland sites and 43% in the islands; 56% male and 44% female. The average group age was 19.5 years. Key results show that:

- Overall, greater and more frequent application of skills across all six categories of economic activities was reported at the end of the program compared to the start of the program. The number of participants who reported applying skills often or very often was between 8% and 33% larger at the end of the program than at the start. Greatest increase was displayed in category 4: carpentry, welding, construction, electrical services.
- A large number of economic activities were reported as "unpaid" compared to "paid" or "self-employed." After follow-up discussions and focus groups, it was clarified that respondents selected "unpaid" when the economic activity was not "formal employment;" that is,

when it was part of a family business where no direct payment was issued to the person (though family gains were perceived), or when the form of payment was in-kind under a barter approach. All of which are common practices across project sites, helping explain and contextualize results.

- 99% of participants from both BE and WFD trainings reported applying new or improved livelihood skills. However, as shown in the graph, the degree and frequency of skills application varied from bronze to platinum (see Figure 24). Looking at the figures for "all" (BE and WFD together), most responses (62%) were between bronze and silver levels, 26% were gold, and only 11% were platinum.

More on the LAR

Visit equalls.edc.org (Resources section) for a LAR toolkit including a copy of the LAR survey; supporting materials for its use and adaptation for different purposes and settings; and a summarized and full report of LAR results in EQuALLS2.

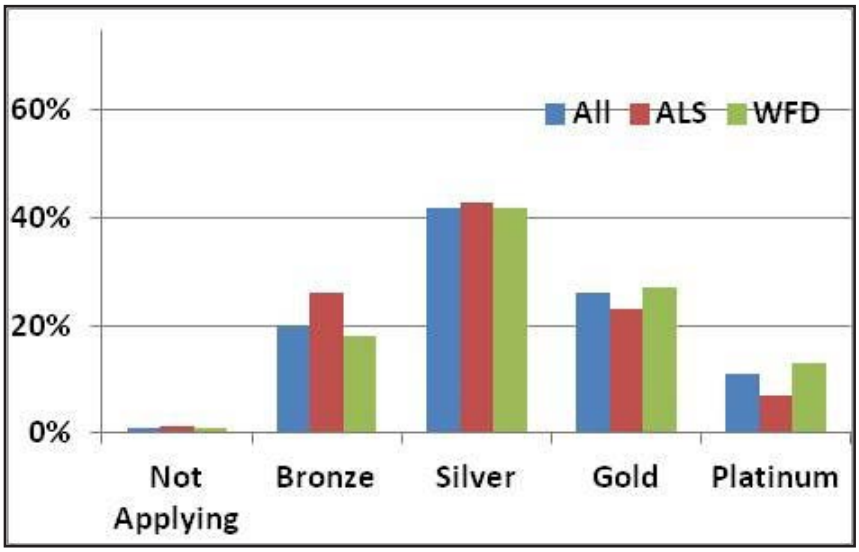


Figure 24. LAR results

Scale Interpretation
Not Applying – Learner is applying very few of the skills, and those few being applied are being done so on an irregular basis.
Bronze – Learner is applying some of the skills on a regular basis, but most are still on an irregular basis, or not at all.
Silver – Learner is applying most of the skills; some are on a regular basis, and others are more infrequently.
Gold – Learner is applying almost all of the skills on a regular basis, and some very frequently.
Platinum – Learner is applying all of the skills on a regular or a very frequent basis.

b. Tracking After the Program – A tracer study and an inventory of youth activities were conducted to better understand what youth were engaged in after several months or years of having participated in EQuALLS2 BE and WFD programs.

A *tracer* used a representative sample of 758 completers, randomly selected, from both BE and WFD trainings, across all project sites and implementing partners. A total of 653 interviews were conducted. This included 309 BE and 344 WFD completers; 63% male and 37% female; the majority (77%) between 15 and 24 years of age, 16% older, and 7% younger. Results revealed that:

- Although the main goal of EQuALLS2 was not necessarily to bring participants back to formal school but to strengthen their skills through an alternative education system, 18% of BE and 16% of WFD completers reported having returned to formal school. The

majority (88%) of those in BE programs went to primary and secondary levels, and the majority (83%) of those in WFD programs went to secondary and higher education levels. This suggests that the program, although unintentionally, served to some degree as a transition to formal schooling.

- The top four reasons for those who reported not returning to formal school were: (1) financial constraints (29%); (2) working (17%); (3) getting married (9%); and (4) lack of interest in formal schooling (9%).
- Despite the fact that the project operates in areas with limited economic opportunities, especially in the formal employment sector, as many as 48% of interviewees reported working. Follow-up discussions and consultations revealed that this information excluded cases of family-based livelihood activities because respondents did not report those as "working" since they do not receive direct payment. Out of those who reported working, 57% were paid, 33% were self-employed, and 10% had no data or were engaged in unpaid activities.
- Almost equal numbers from each program reported working, namely 46% from BE and 51% from WFD (as shown in Figure 25). This suggests that skills learned in BE are applicable to work settings. It also suggests that the project succeeded in providing the basic and transferable skills through both BE and WFD offerings to enable participants to continue their livelihoods path.

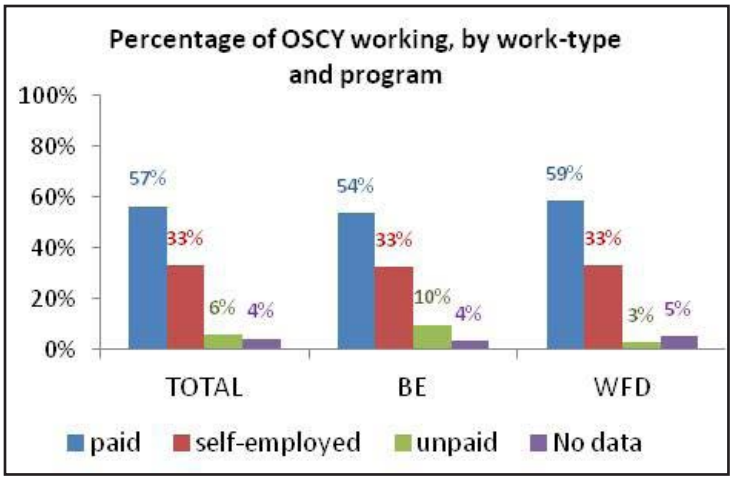


Figure 25. Percentage of OSCY working

A similar effort, led by Save the Children, produced an *inventory* of youth activities after their participation in WFD and BE programs. (Table 10) The tracer, discussed above, provides a broad picture of the number of participants returning to school or working across all project sites. To complement that, this inventory provides details about the

type of activities youth engaged in, but it was limited to youth working at Save the Children sites.

This inventory includes 1,722 individuals who participated in a total of 3,335 interventions (3,072 WFD and 263 BE) between 2008 and 2011, covering 61 different types of course offerings in 17 Municipalities.

The types of work activities reported by youth were grouped in 23 *work clusters*. As shown in Table 10, most youth reported being self-employed, followed by working in transportation services; agriculture, livestock, and fishery; and abroad as overseas foreign workers (OFWs). Results are in line with local economy trends and labor market characteristics showing that self-employment is a viable path. It also shows that while agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and transportation services are the most predominant work activities, a sizeable number of completers pursued work abroad.

The variety of work clusters and activities youth reported being engaged in suggests that youth's skills were transferable and useful in various occupations and livelihood activities.

Table 10. Types of work activities

Work Clusters	Total
1. Self Employed	550
2. Services - Transportation	275
3. Agriculture/Livestock/Fishery	170
4. Abroad / OFW	118
5. Others	90
6. Sales (Employee)	88
7. Home/ Hotel Services	68
8. NGO	64
9. Company/Factory worker	53
10. Services - Helper	49
11. Construction	48
12. Services - technician/mechanic	41
13. Government	35
14. Carpentry	24
15. Military / Marines	24
16. Private employee (not specified)	21
17. Services - Food	20
18. Educator	19
19. Desk work	10
20. Making Goods	6
21. Services - other	6
22. Services - Beauty/Body care	6
23. Media/information/ communication	2
Grand Total	1787

Contributions to Broad-Based Youth Development and Peace Building

EQuALLS2's OSCY component was closely linked to the project's overall mandate to decrease the social isolation of children and youth in conflict-affected Muslim Mindanao. Investments in re-engaging out of school youth in enhanced learning and livelihood opportunities were seen to play a key role in peace building at the local and regional levels, as this population had often been a recruitment pool for various antisocial and extremist groups. The project tracked its impact on this broad-based positive youth development agenda through the pioneering use of the Developmental Asset Profile (DAP) survey tool.

The DAP survey was contextualized for use with out-of-school populations and pioneered in EQuALLS2. Data was collected at two points in time (Time 1 and Time 2) from over 700 youth participating in BE and WFD offerings across sites. Key results revealed that:

- Out-of-school populations come to programs with existing assets, attributes, and abilities. As shown in Figure 26 (solid lines=Time 1), despite all contextual circumstances, participants entered the program with a fair level of assets across all categories (personal, social, family, school, community). This result challenges common perceptions of out-of-school youth as negative members of society

The Developmental Asset Profile (DAP) is a 58-item survey instrument created by Search Institute to measure the presence, and change over time, of 40 developmental assets, the presence of which is closely correlated to positive youth behavior.

(or "bad grass" as heard in the program). EQuALLS2 showed that OSCY, when supported with the right skills as tools, can lead positive lives.

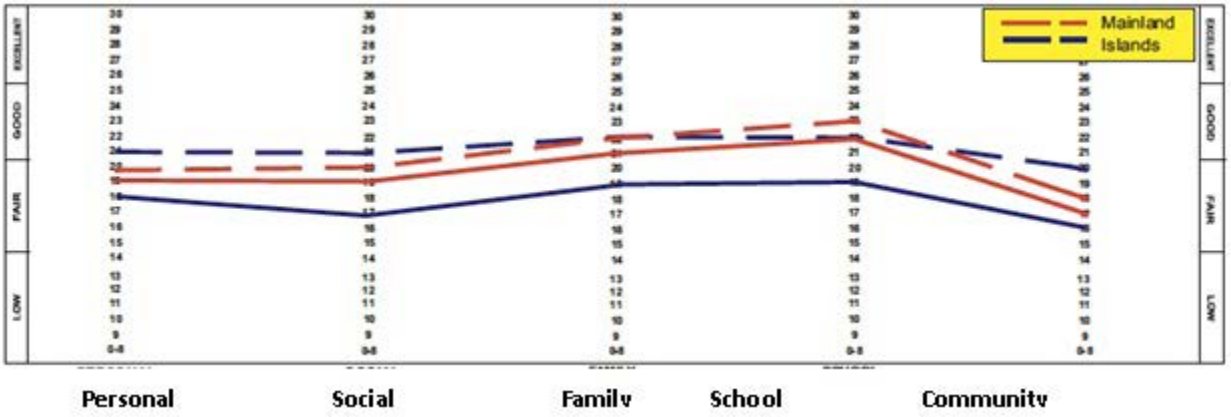


Figure 26. DAP results

- Interventions focused on basic education and workforce development can help build positive assets among participants. Comparing results over time, namely, the solid (Time 1) and dotted lines (Time 2) in the graph, it is evident that youth in both mainland sites (red) and the islands (blue) increased their developmental assets during their participation in the program.
- Greatest increases were registered in the *social* category, something critical in conflict-affected settings where, according to USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM), perceptions of social inclusion are a key predictor of peace building and conflict mitigation.

Overall DAP results showed that while strengthening developmental assets of participants, the program generated a longer lasting impact on the target population. Participants not only acquired the basic skills and WFD skills, but they also strengthened attributes that contributed to their ability to play positive roles in all life settings beyond the project.

For more on the DAP Results and Materials

Visit equalls.edc.org (Resources section) to access the following:

A full report of DAP results in EQuALLS2, titled "Tracking the Impact of Returning to Education – How Reconnecting Young People with Educational Opportunities Contributes to Peace Building in Mindanao."

A set of handbooks developed by EQuALLS2 to inform the use, administration, data analysis, and application of DAP results, based on the experience in EQuALLS2.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

During the course of implementation, the OSCY component of EQuALLS2 evolved and underwent enhancements and modifications. During that journey, the project learned some lessons worth sharing that may positively influence similar initiatives in the future. Following are the most salient lessons learned and recommendations:

OSCY are a very diverse population in terms of knowledge, skills, and existing activities. Out-of-school populations are not a uniform group. Successful programs thus must make an explicit effort to learn more about the target population in order to fill in skill gaps without conflicting with participants' family and economic obligations. In addition, programs must start where youth are in terms of their location (and overall mobility), their existing skills and knowledge, and the pathways and opportunities open to them in the local market economy, along with the time constraints they face in their daily schedules due to existing livelihood commitments. Successful programs for OSCY also need to include post-training supports, which can take many different forms, from employment linkages to entrepreneurship training.

Out-of-school populations are constantly facing trade-offs between earning and learning opportunities. Data from the use of the Livelihood Activity Report (LAR) opened our eyes more fully to the many competing demands of out-of-school youth's time and energy. Effective program designs must therefore take into consideration the pre-existing livelihood activities that out-of-school youth are already involved in prior to their enrollment in basic education or technical skills training offerings (including those related to employment, self-employment, or household-linked livelihood pursuits, and those that involve both direct earnings and payments in-kind). Program developers need to use the information about such pre-existing livelihood commitments as they begin to delineate program hours, locations, pacing and intensity, duration, attendance requirements, and flexible learning options; for these features will determine how likely it is that the most marginalized (and economically active) of out-of-school youth cohorts will be able to benefit from courses and services offered.

OSCY come to programs with existing assets, interests, and abilities. This was confirmed through activities in the field and, more systematically, via baseline results from the DAP survey. Successful programs will build on these assets, interests, and abilities while addressing key gaps. It is important not to make assumptions, at either the cohort or individual level, about what learners existing asset profiles might look

like, but rather to use tools such as the DAP to surface youth's perceptions about their own situations. It is then possible to draw on existing strengths while at the same time filling in key gaps—trying to build a strong, holistic foundation for continued positive youth development.

Relevant offerings include skills that participants can transfer and apply in different settings. As revealed in a WFD study (by Dr. Briones), employers and other market sector actors are highly interested not only in technical skills but also in work-readiness skills that can be transferred from a particular occupation to any other work setting. Thus, successful WFD initiatives not only address technical (hard) skills but also integrate work-readiness skills.

Opportunities and livelihood pathways for out-of-school populations are not always either linear or sequential. Youth may take different steps than originally thought of, thus, programs need to build in flexible systems that allow for surprises. Successful programs need to focus on removing barriers to access by creating multiple entry and exit points from programming that address priority learning needs, and allow for the incremental earning of meaningful credentials. Participants need to perceive that project offerings will be adapted to better meet their requirements, rather then there being an expectation that participants need to change themselves in order to fit into the scope, scale, or sequencing of offerings a project thinks might be important.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

The EQuALLS2 monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system was designed to go beyond simply counting numerical project outputs to addressing five sets of questions, each with a different purpose and each forming one strand of the overall strategic M&E framework:

1. How is EQuALLS2 contributing to USAID's strategic global education initiatives?
   Purpose: Strategic USAID Accountability

2. What are the common outputs and outcomes of EQuALLS2 program interventions? What is the shared development story that can be communicated internally and externally about our work? How can the effectiveness of EQuALLS2 be understood by key audiences within USAID, DepED, and by key stakeholders at the national and local level in the Philippines?
   Purpose: EQuALLS2 Program Accountability

3. Are community partners and key local, regional, and national government decision-makers acquiring the outcomes-oriented evidence and cost-benefit information that will inform decisions about the types of program interventions for in-school and out-of-school youth that they are willing and able to sustain and/or scale up? Can these same partners and decision-makers identify the types of capacity building and support necessary to sustain interventions?
   Purpose: Sustainability and Scalability by Local Stakeholders

4. What questions need to be answered to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of new and existing EQuALLS2 implementation and M&E activities? What new approaches might be useful? What do we (EQuALLS2 coordinating agency and individual partner agencies) want to know more about?
   Purpose: EQuALLS2 Documentation and Learning for Program Improvement

5. What other kinds of data do partner organizations want or need to track?
   Purpose: Partner-Specific Data Tracking

These five sets of questions formed the five strands of the EQuALLS2 Strategic Framework for Monitoring and Evaluation.

Innovative Data Collection Tools

In addition to the development of a state-of-the-art management information system (MIS), described in the next section, the project introduced, adapted, and implemented a variety of innovative data collection tools, tailored to monitor implementation, document learning, and improve data-based decision-making for program improvement. These tools were also used to collect qualitative data needed to create, give, and present a more comprehensive picture of the project's depth, quality, and impact. The Documentation and Learning section that follows and the various discussions on Project Impact under each Intermediate Result in the previous sections provide additional information about the assessment and documentation instruments that are highlighted here:

- **PTA and LSB Capacity Assessment Tool**: Developed by EDC, the tool assesses the organizations' strengths and areas for improvement along five areas of capacity building: (1) governance and management; (2) education improvement planning and project management; (3) financial management; (4) networking and advocacy; and (5) tracking and communicating education improvement.

- **Barangay Education Report Card or BERC system**: The BERC system is a cycle of data collection and analysis, planning, and sharing progress on education and skills improvement plans for in-school and out-of-school youth using performance indicators related to the following: physical facilities, student and learner achievement, teaching and learning resources, community participation, and education in emergencies (EiE) as applicable.

- **SCOPE (Standards-based Classroom Observation Protocol for Educators)**: Developed by EDC, this observation tool assesses and captures changes in teachers' instructional practices. It measures the following teaching skills: (a) active learning and student-centered teaching; (b) cooperative and inquiry-based learning; (c) teaching for higher-order thinking skills, as well as problem-solving skills; (d) effective time and classroom management skills; and (e) effective questioning strategies.

- **Early Grade Reading Assessment or EGRA**: This tool is used internationally for assessing the following foundational reading skills of children: letter recognition, phonemic awareness, oral reading fluency, listening and reading comprehension. Development of EGRA was supported by USAID and the World Bank. EDC developed and tried out an electronic version of EGRA during the last year of

the project, with a small sample of students in Zamboanga.

- **Development Assets Profile (DAP)**: Developed by Search Institute, this survey instrument is used to measure the presence and change over time of 40 developmental assets that are closely correlated with positive youth behavior. EQuALLS2, in partnership with Search, adapted and translated the DAP to be relevant and useful to Mindanao youth.

- **Livelihood Activity Report (LAR)**: The LAR is a self-reported tool developed by EDC in close partnership with implementing partners, trainers, learners, private sector, TESDA, and DepED-BALS to measure the frequency and degree in which out-of-school youth are applying new and/or enhanced livelihood skills including (a) development of self, (b) communication skills, (c) problem solving and critical thinking, and (d) work habits. It examines the application of skills in six categories of economic activities.

In addition, EQuALLS2 used simple surveys for self-reporting (e.g., pre- and post-surveys were used to look at change in teachers' use of ICT, book use, etc.), as well as other data collection tools provided by DepED, such as the Philippines Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) and Test of English Proficiency for Teachers (TEPT), and by non-governmental agencies (e.g., science and math tests developed by the Center for Educational Measurement).

Management Information System (MIS)

EDC developed a project-wide MIS to manage data submitted by lead implementing partners for analysis and reporting. Establishing this project-wide MIS was essential as it helped the project assess its progress more accurately and in a timely manner. The database was designed to be accessible online, both for uploading data and for report generation.

Some of the challenges the project encountered in making the MIS fully functional and operational included the following:

- Helping partners transition from their own system of collecting, recording, and reporting data, which ranged from rudimentary (paper-based and manually counted) to functional (electronic-based using a simple spreadsheet). EDC provided hands-on training and one-on-one coaching to partner M&E staff to use and manage the MIS on their end.
- Properly and fully staffing the M&E and MIS teams of EDC and lead implementing partners.

- Validating data in the MIS and ensuring that partners and stakeholders were provided with timely feedback on the quality and results of data submitted.

By addressing these challenges, EQuALLS 2 ended up with a fully functional MIS that partners, USAID, and stakeholders relied on for valid and reliable information.

Data Quality Assurance

EDC conducted MIS data validation exercises to ensure the quality of both the quantitative and qualitative data that was being used for reporting the project's progress and accomplishments. Validation of data in the MIS involved two steps:

1. Review and verification of primary documents supporting the data in the MIS
2. Field validation that involved finding and interviewing the beneficiary or a person who knew the beneficiary

Field validation was carried out to confirm that the recorded beneficiaries of project interventions met the established indicator definitions. Traditional random sampling methodology with stratification by lead implementing partners was used to determine the number of samples to validate by indicator. The stratification by lead implementing partners ensured proportionate representation of accomplishments among the partners. Data sampled were limited to those recorded in the MIS from FY2008 to end of FY2010 (September 30, 2010). Based on the total of 1,602 beneficiary samples and 77 classrooms, 94% of data entered were found to be valid.

The final numbers accomplished per indicator for Strand 1: Strategic Accountability are listed in Table 11. This strand of indicators respond to the reporting formats required by the Foreign Assistance Coordination and Tracking System (FACTS), which is the global integrated reporting system of USAID and the State Department. Also included in the table are indicators that are subsets of FACTS indicators, for example, community learning centers that are considered classrooms for non-school-based settings, as well as other indicators for demonstrating project reach.

Table 11. Strand 1: LOP targets and accomplishments

FACTS Indicator	LOP Targets	Accomplishments					LOP Accomplishments
		FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	
IR 1: Increased Access to Learning Opportunities							
Number of classrooms repaired with USG assistance	1,180	21	179	330	365	347	**1,242**
Number of classrooms constructed with USG assistance	120	-	17	40	88	48	**193**
Number of learners enrolled in USG-supported primary schools or equivalent non-school-based settings	310,000	329,021	352,535 329,021 + 23,514	389,212 352,535 + 36,677	423,024 389,212 +33,812	465,574 423,024 +42,550	**465,574**
Number of PTAs or similar "school" governance structures supported by USG	850	196	375	639	1,032	729	**1,344**
IR 2: Improved educational quality through strengthened capacity for teaching English, math, and science							
Number of administrators and officials trained (e.g., in school finance, management or governance	2,238	-	22	510	2,396	623	**3,551**
Number of teachers and educators trained with USG support	35,000	4,319	5,080	10,485	9,390	9,216	**38,490**
Number of textbooks and other learning materials provided with USG assistance	1,800,000	-	191,028	924,946	276,708	724,019	**2,116,701**
IR 3: Improved relevance of education and training for out-of-school children and youth (OSCY)							
Number of persons participating in USG-funded WFD programs	35,000	1,972	3,204	8,934	17,881	11,969	**43,960**

FACTS Indicators	LOP Targets	Accomplishments					LOP Accomplishments
		FY2007	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	
Number of WFD initiatives through USG-assisted public-private partnerships	12	1	2	16	12	2	**33**
Embedded within Existing FACTS Indicators							
Number of CLCs refurbished	400	21	137	133	143	137	**571**
Number of CLCs constructed	-	-	3	1	2	0	**6**
Number of OSCY learners enrolled in basic education programs	70,000	12,108	15,048	17,084	18,916	8,042	**71,198**
Number of CIGs awarded	-	-	-	110	440	260	**810**
Non-FACTS Indicator							
Number of learners enrolled under the Scholarship Program	750	-	-	-	451	307	**758**

Table 12. Strand 2: LOP targets and accomplishments

Indicator	LOP Target	LOP Accomplishment
Completion rate	Increase of 4 percentage points from baseline year SY2006–2007	1.7% points
Retention rate	Increase of 4 percentage points from baseline year SY2006–2007	3.0% points
Number of PTAs or similar "school" governance structures increasing their governance, management, and advocacy skills	510 (60% of the total targeted governance structures supported) increased their governance, management, and advocacy skills	612 organizations

Indicator	LOP Target	LOP Accomplishment
Elementary teachers are better prepared to teach English, math and science	At least 50% of teachers increased their average scores by 5% in English, science, and math	English: 37% Science: 55% Math: 44%
	At least 50% of teachers increased their SCOPE scores	56% (118 teachers)
	Teachers increase by at least one level	SRI: 41.62% (72 teachers) ORFA: 54.34% (94 teachers)
Increase in capacity of instructional managers (IMs) to deliver alternative learning system (ALS) programs	At least 70% of total number of IMs (starting 2010) registered improvement by moving from one level to the next in the continuum of beginner, intermediate, advanced, and expert	51.57%
Number of ALS centers using teaching and resource materials	At least 50% of functional/active CLCs have demonstrated use of education materials	77%
Number of educators using education technologies	600 ICT-trained teachers (60% of 1,000 teachers targeted for training on basic computer literacy)	679 (86%)
Increase in student achievement scores (NAT scores)	10% increase from baseline year SY2006–2007	28% increase
Number of OSCY improving their basic education competencies	49,000 (70% of 70,000 OSCY enrolled) have completed a basic education program	58,020 82%
	At least 50% of OSCY completers of BE program have moved from one literacy level to the next	68%
Number of OSY mastering livelihood and workforce readiness skills offerings	At least 21,000 (60% of 35,000) of OSY complete WFD programs	36,538 (82%)
	At least 50% of OSY who take the assessment obtain certification	39% (2,851)
Number of OSCY using new and/or improved livelihood skills	At least 80% of OSCY completers are applying new and/or improved livelihood skills (starting 2010)	99.1% (3,194)

Indicator	LOP Target	LOP Accomplishment
Embedded within Existing Strand 2 Indicators		
Number of learners enrolled under the Scholarship Program	750	758
Number of enrollees who successfully complete scholarship-supported programs	90% of SP-supported enrollees	704 (93%)

Documentation and Learning

EDC, in consultation with USAID and lead implementing partners, developed an annual documentation and research agenda for improved delivery of evidence-based education and livelihood development programs. This agenda promoted an iterative process for asking key questions and developing and documenting new approaches to answering the questions. Documentation and Learning activities were structured to identify, systematize, and/or consolidate effective approaches; describe replicable program models; assess areas for new program development; and refine the overall monitoring and evaluation framework.

Documentation and Learning activities included the design and implementation of field studies; appraisal and assessment of implementation of good practices; and collaborative program development work with DepED, DepED ARMM, and partner institutions such as SEAMEO-INNOTECH and UP NISMED. A series of related Documentation and Learning products was developed by the EDC technical team together with lead implementing partners, relevant government agencies, locally based consultants, and senior technical advisors. The types of products developed included toolkits, training modules and manuals, learning series, and studies. Detailed description of each product follows table 13.

Table 13. EQuALLS2 Learning Agenda

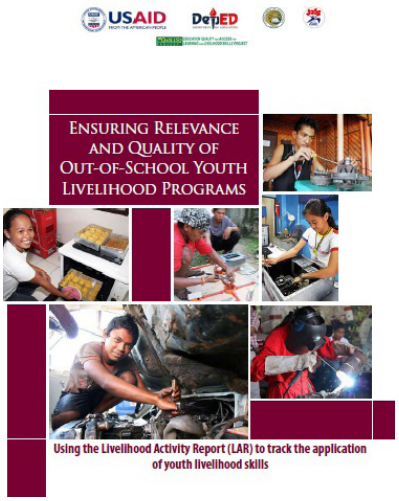
Learning/Research Topics	Questions for EQuALLS2	Resulting Products Developed
Common community organizational capacity assessments for: 1. Community institutional capacity building 2. Student achievement tracking	• How can EQuALLS2 best build the capacity of community organizations to be active partners in educational improvement? • How can communities gather, access, and use data in their efforts to improve the quality of learning for in-school and out-of-school youth?	✓ PTA and LSB Capacity Assessment Tool ✓ BERC Handbook ✓ BERC Learning Series ✓ PTA Manuals (Save the Children)
Youth development tracking tools	• How can EQuALLS2 track and report positive youth development outcomes participation in EQuALLS2 education and livelihood programs?	✓ DAP Handbooks ✓ LAR Toolkit (includes LAR Report and Learning Series)
Professional development and capacity building for educators	• How can EQuALLS2 coordinate with DepED and other donor initiatives to improve the English reading, writing, and speaking abilities of educators? Learners?	✓ Whole School Reading Program (WSRP) modules and WSRP Learning Series ✓ LPP Manual and Learning Series ✓ ESM modules ✓ Training Manual for Instructional Practices (includes SCOPE Tools and Learning Series)
Technology and Materials	• How can EQuALLS2 effectively integrate educational technology and materials into the daily teaching and learning practices in partner schools and learning centers	✓ Learning Series on Supplementary Books Delivery Program ✓ Learning Series on ICT Program ('Myths and Realities' of ICT Program for Education)
Public-Private Alliances	• How can USAID's GDA strategy for private sector investment be used to full effectiveness in Mindanao?	• Learning Series on "Developing Effective Public-Private Partnerships for Education Improvement in Mindanao"
Grants system	• How can the EQuALLS2 grants system be managed in a way that supports the program's approach to developing capacity at all levels?	✓ Grants management plan and manual (processes, tools, and guidelines for users)

1) **Toolkits**

- **PTA Capacity Assessment Tool** – The PTA Capacity Assessment Tool handbook was initially designed as a guide for facilitators who conducted the initial capacity assessment of PTAs. EDC later enhanced the original tool to enable PTAs to measure and track their own performance or development as an organization. The tool is organized by category: (1) Governance and Management, (2) Education Improvement and Planning, (3) Financial Management, (4) Networking and Advocacy, and (5) Tracking and Communicating Educational Performance.

- **DAP Handbooks** – EDC developed a set of five handbooks for various teams involved in the use of DAP. These included guides for DAP coordinators, DAP administrators, service provider staff and instructional managers, and a DAP data management handbook.

- **LAR Toolkit** – The full set of LAR resources in the Toolkit includes the LAR Survey Tool, LAR Administration Guidelines, a LAR Coding Manual and Data Entry Template, and LAR Interpretive Ranges, which may inform preliminary data analysis efforts.



2) **Training Modules and Manuals**

- **BERC Handbook** – This training manual is for PTAs, school administrators, and LGUs, particularly those that have been trained as BERC Facilitators, to use as a resource for training new sets of officers on the BERC system.

- **Training Manuals for Expanded PTAs** – Developed by Save the Children, this training package is primarily for the use of the Municipal Education and Skills Development Council (MESDC) in engaging communities in developing their Community Education and Skills Plan (CESP), which forms part of the Municipal Education Skills Plan (MESP).

- **English, Science, and Math Teacher Training Modules** – These are complete materials for three courses developed by UP NISMED, DepED, and EDC for EQuALLS2 ESM teachers. The courses focus on strengthening the content knowledge and instructional practices of the teachers who became learning facilitators in the EQuALLS2 Educators' Professional Development Program (EPDP).

- **Whole School Reading Program (WSRP) Modules** – This package of three courses was developed by the EQuALLS2 EDP team together with consultants from Mindanao TEIs and DepED. These materials are designed to improve teachers' skills in reading instruction, strengthen their proficiency in reading English, and create a schoolwide focus on improving reading skills.

- **SCOPE Training Modules** – This compilation of training guides and videos are designed to prepare teams of skilled observers of classroom practice. Used to train DepED administrators to conduct classroom observations with a high degree of inter-rater reliability, these materials also provide professional development in collaborative and inquiry-based learning.

- **Learning Partnership Program (LPP) Manual** – Developed by EDC in consultation with DepED, the LPP manual is for learning facilitators and learning leaders (administrators at school, district and division levels) to use in establishing a school-based Learning Partnership Programs.

3) **Learning Series** – The Learning Series comprises 13 four-page publications that describe the results and document lessons learned from specific EQuALLS2 Learning Agenda questions and project interventions. Based on studies and the experiences of stakeholders and project implementers, the EQuALLS2 Learning Series includes:

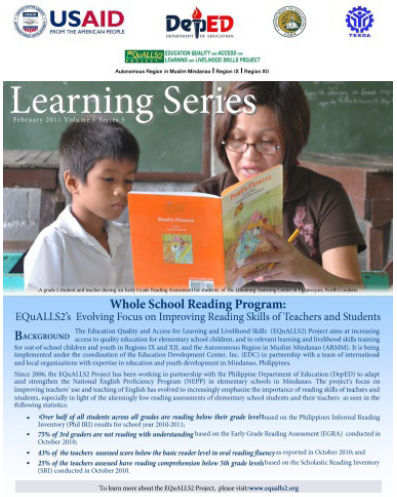
- **Key Elements for Successful Workforce Development Programs**
  August 2010, Volume 1, Series 1
  Provides a brief overview and key findings of the Workforce Development (WFD) Study conducted in January 2010 in selected project sites in the Zamboanga Peninsula. The study was aimed at identifying key elements that contribute to successful WFD programming.

- **Ensuring Relevance and Quality of Out-of-School Youth Livelihood Programs: Using the Livelihood Activity Report (LAR) to Track the Application of Youth Livelihood Skills**
  September 2010, Volume 1, Series 2
  Shares selected findings from the application of the Livelihood Activity Report (LAR) with 1,013 OSY who participated in EQuALLS2's basic education and skills training offerings in 2009–2010. It also describes ways that data from the LAR are being used to enhance the relevance and accessibility of ongoing EQuALLS2 programming for out-of-school youth.

- **Improving Instructional Practices in English, Math and Science: Baseline Results from Classroom Observations Using SCOPE**
  October 2010, Volume 1, Series 3
  Presents an overview of the baseline results from classroom observations using the Standards-based Classroom Observation Protocol for Educators (SCOPE). With proper observer training and administration, SCOPE provides a way to move beyond self-reported data on teacher performance to systematic and reliable observations of classrooms over time.

- **USAID-EQuALLS2 Supplementary Books Delivery Program: Sharing 10 Best Practices**
  January 2011, Volume 1, Series 4
  Shares 10 best practices that emerged from EQuALLS2 Project's iterative learning and reflection process during the implementation of a large-scale and highly acclaimed book delivery effort.

- **Whole School Reading Program (WSRP): EQuALLS2's Evolving Focus on Improving Reading Skills of Teachers and Students**
  February 2011, Volume 1, Series 5
  Provides an overview of EQuALLS2's consolidated experience and learning to introduce the Whole School Reading Program, focused on improving English fluency and teaching ability of all teachers in the school.


USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE
DepED DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EQUALLS2 EDUCATION QUALITY and ACCESS for LEARNING and LIVELIHOOD SKILLS PROJECT
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (Region IX & Region XII)

Learning Series
February 2011 | Volume 1 | Series 5

Whole School Reading Program:
EQuALLS2's Evolving Focus on Improving Reading Skills of Teachers and Students

BACKGROUND The Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQuALLS2) Project aims at increasing access to quality education for elementary school children, and to relevant learning and livelihood skills training for out-of-school children and youth in Regions IX and XII, and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). It is being implemented under the coordination of the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) in partnership with a team of international and local organizations with expertise in education and youth development in Mindanao, Philippines.

Since 2006, the EQuALLS2 Project has been working in partnership with the Philippine Department of Education (DepED) to adapt and strengthen the National English Proficiency Program (NEPP) in elementary schools in Mindanao. The project's focus on improving teachers' use and teaching of English has evolved to increasingly emphasize the importance of reading skills of teachers and students, especially in light of the alarmingly low reading assessments of elementary school students and their teachers as seen in the following statistics:

- ***Over half of all students across all grades are reading below their grade level*** based on the Philippines Informal Reading Inventory (PhIRI) results for school year 2010-2011;
- ***75% of 3rd graders are not reading with understanding*** based on the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) conducted in October 2010;
- ***43% of the teachers assessed score below the basic reader level in oral reading fluency*** as reported in October 2010; and
- ***25% of the teachers assessed have reading comprehension below 5th grade levels*** based on the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) conducted in October 2010.

*To learn more about the EQuALLS2 Project, please visit www.equalls2.org

- **Learning Partnership Program (LPP): Teachers Helping Teachers to Achieve Content Mastery and Strengthen Instructional Practices in English, Science and Math**
  May 2011, Volume 1, Series 6
  Describes the Learning Partnership Program and shares experiences and lessons learned from its implementation in selected EQuALLS2 schools in Regions 9 and 12, and ARMM. LPP is EQuALLS2's Educator Professional Development Program (EPDP) that was adapted from the teacher mentoring approach developed during EQuALLS2's earlier collaboration with the Department of Education in enhancing the National English Proficiency Program (NEPP).

- **'Myths and Realities' of Implementing ICT for Education in High-Poverty, Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao**
  June 2011, Volume 1, Series 7
  Documents the steps taken to design and implement the EQuALLS2 ICT program and compares certain ICT assumptions (referred to as "Myths") against the realities encountered during program implementation. It shares lessons learned and highlights

factors to consider, and things to look out for, when implementing similar ICT programs. It is also meant to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on how to ensure that ICT in education can be truly practical and useful to education development initiatives.

- **Developing Effective Public-Private Partnerships for Education Improvement in High-Poverty, Conflict-Affected Mindanao**
  July 2011, Volume 1, Series 8
  Outlines EQuALLS2's Public-Private Partnership (PPP) program and describes its partnerships with the private sector, namely Petron Foundation, National Book Store Foundation, Brother's Brother Foundation, and Microsoft Philippines.

- **Implementing Education and Youth Development Programming in the Fragile Context of Mindanao, Philippines**
  July 2011, Volume 1, Series 9
  Discusses lessons learned, challenges faced, and key measures taken to ensure successful implementation of the EQuALLS2 Project in these high-poverty and conflict-affected areas in Mindanao, Philippines.

- **The Barangay Education Report Card (BERC): Tracking In-School and Out-of-School Education Improvements in the Philippines**
  September 2011, Volume 1, Series 10
  During the last four years of project implementation, the EQuALLS2 Project has embarked on developing PTAs and LSBs to become better functioning organizations, enabling them to manage education improvement projects more effectively. Part of the capacity-building process is the development of the Barangay Education Report Card (BERC), used by the community to track education improvements in their respective communities. This document provides an overview of the BERC and lessons learned in the process of its implementation.

- **EQuALLS2's Scholarship Program for Out-of-School Youth**
  September 2011, Volume 1, Series 11
  Describes the EQuALLS2's Scholarship Program, which was designed to help transform the existing survivalist-oriented economic activities of participating out-of-school youth to more viable, economically productive, livelihood pathways, thereby supporting community-wide economic growth and peace building. It also features sample stories from graduates of the program.

- **Whole School Reading Program (WSRP): Assessment Results**
  October 2011, Volume 1, Series 12
  Outlines the initial assessment results of the WSRP after a year of implementation of the program.

- **SCOPE: EQuALLS 2 Trained Teachers Demonstrate Improved Teaching Skills on All Dimensions**
  October 2011, Volume 1, Series 12
  Provides a summary of the SCOPE assessment results.

4) **Studies**

- **Youth Livelihood Mapping Study, Mindanao Philippines**
  June 2009
  This study provides a more systematic understanding of the full range of existing and new livelihoods of individuals and households of out-of-school youth in Mindanao. It also presents a preliminary qualitative analysis of the different ways and kinds of skills that these out-of-school youth currently apply to existing and/or new household- and individual-level economic activities.

- **Labor Market Assessment: Out-of-School Children and Youth**
  Mindanao Philippines
  June 2009
  This report is a desk assessment of youth livelihood opportunities in Mindanao.

- **Tracking the Impact of Returning to Education: How Re-connecting Young People with Educational Opportunities Contributes to Peace Building in Mindanao**
  March 2010
  This document presents the findings from a pioneering study on the impacts of re-engaging out-of-school children and youth (OSCY) in basic education and livelihood skills training, particularly in conflict-affected Mindanao. The study tracked the presence and change over time in the quantity and caliber of developmental assets among OSCY participants in the EQuALLS2 project.

- **Ensuring Relevance and Quality of Out-of-School Youth Livelihood Programs: Using the Livelihood Activity Report (LAR) to track the application of youth livelihood skills**
  October 2010
  This report shares the background and findings from the application of the Livelihood Activity Report (LAR) tool and describes ways that data from the LAR were being used to enhance the relevance

and accessibility of ongoing EQuALLS2 programming for out-of-school youth.

- **Workforce Development Initiatives for Out-of School Youth – What Works?** ***A Participatory Research with Youth and Communities in Southern Philippines***
  January 2011
  This is the full report of the study conducted in January 2010 in selected project sites in the Zamboanga Peninsula to identify key elements that contribute to successful WFD programming. It also included collecting data with the use of video in addition to field notes and other research tools.

- **The Community Learning Center Management Committee (CLCMC):** ***A Grassroots Mechanism for Helping Improve the Relevance of Education and Training of Out-of-school Children and Youth***
  August 2011
  This is a case study of four CLCMCs under EQuALLS2, through lead implementing partner Education and Livelihood Skills Alliance (ELSA). This report profiles the CLCMC structures, management, and roles and functions, including coordination, community orientation, monitoring, and motivation of learners. It also highlights (1) feedback from the CLCMCs on the contributions of field implementing partners, (2) the impact of the CLC on Alternative Learning System learners, (3) issues/challenges and measures taken to mitigate them, and (4) sustainability plans.

- **Learning from EQuALLS2's Educator Professional Development Program in Region 12 Sites**
  September 2011
  This study was conducted to assess the perceived learning of the peer teacher trainers and school administrators who participated in trainings under EQuALLS2's Educator Professional Development Program in Region 12 sites. It summarizes the outputs and outcomes of the project, helps identify areas for improvement, and outlines possible future projects that could more effectively address the barriers to quality education in the Philippines. As a result, the study can help identify which type of professional development trainings should be given priority.

- **Local Government Support to Education: EQuALLS2 Experience**
  December 2011
  This is a case study of six municipalities to determine the LGU (barangay and municipal levels) and LSB contributions or support

provided to education improvements for in-school and out-of-school children and youth in the municipality, and to document the challenges and good practices related to resources for education.

Dissemination and Sharing of Data Results, Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

EQuALLS2 incorporated a Documentation and Learning Agenda into programming to increase the body of knowledge on basic education and livelihood programming in the development arena. In 2010 and 2011, EQuALLS2 hosted a series of learning events to disseminate information that used a range of approaches, including action research, case studies, documentation of collaborative program development, and field observations. Results have informed program improvement and fed back into decision-making and planning for implementation and learning.

These events, outlined below, were designed to provide a platform for DepED, LGUs, and other local participants to share and dialogue on how to ensure that promising education improvement initiatives can be sustained in high-poverty, conflict-affected areas in Mindanao.

- **How Re-connecting Out-of-School Children and Youth with Educational Opportunities Contributes to Peace-building in Mindanao**
  March 2010
  This seminar presented the findings from a pioneering study on the impacts of re-engaging OSCY in basic education and livelihood skills training, particularly in conflict-affected Mindanao. The study tracked the presence and change over time in the quantity and caliber of developmental assets among OSCY participants in the EQuALLS2 Project.

- **Workforce Development Roundtable Discussions and Presentation of Results**
  August 2010, January 2011, and April 2011
  What makes Workforce Development (WFD) programs for out-of-school youth successful? In January 2010, a study was conducted in selected project sites in Zamboanga City, Dinas, and Alicia to examine the effect of EQuALLS2 Workforce Development (WFD) offerings on youth and their communities, with the goal of identifying factors contributing to the success of WFD programs. An innovative feature of this study was the use of video to document the data gathering phase as well as to provide evidence of the participants' responses to the study questions. The result of the study is

a written report and a summary of it in video format that features respondents and provides evidence to the findings showcased in the report.

Preliminary results of the study were validated at the community level in August 2010. And, final results of the study and the final video were shared with community representatives together with stakeholders in Zamboanga City in January 2011.

On April 6, 2011, the EQuALLS2 Project shared this study with researchers, development practitioners, the academic community, donors, TESDA, and others. This discussion provided a platform for participants to learn about and dialogue on the findings, as the findings will help inform other WFD initiatives in the future and overall decision-making.

- **Instructional Manager's (IMs) Summit**
  February 2011
  A cross-partner event held February 21–22, 2011, gathered instruc tional managers (IMs) of the EQuALLS2 Project. More than a hundred participated in the event, which provided an opportunity for them to (1) share and learn about different modalities of training delivery in ALS, (2) share good practices and learn from one another—"IMs learn best from fellow IMs," (3) celebrate good practices and recognize IMs' work, and (4) contribute to a community of practice of seasoned practitioners (IMs).

Skill-building activity during the IM Summit

- **Knowledge Skills Challenge**
  April 2011
  The Knowledge Skills Challenge was a cross-partner event for participants of BE and WFD trainings. Participants showcased their own learned skills as well as learned from participants from other sites. The EDC-led Knowledge and Skills Challenge included two parts: (1) a "knowledge challenge" involving learners from basic education programs who competed in a quiz show, essay writing, and poster-slogan making contest and (2) a "skills challenge" with competitions in three trade areas: (a) welding, where participants built a plant stand; (b) baking and pastry production, where they prepared a one-layer bridal cake; and (c) beauty care, where they created bridal facial make-up and nail art.

- **Measuring Youth's Application of Livelihood Skills: A How-to Seminar on Using and Adapting the LAR Survey Tool**
  June 2011
  How can we measure the application of livelihood skills by youth?

EQuALLS2 developed and used a standardized survey tool (LAR) that helps track the application of livelihood skills gained by youth through their participation in a range of basic education and WFD programs.

On June 2, 2011, participants gained a clear understanding of the design, monitoring, and evaluation applications of LAR data, and the ways in which the LAR might be used or adapted for use in different contexts and by a wide range of actors.

- **Show & Tell: Sharing the Learning Partnership Program (LPP)**
  June 2011
  The LPP as an evolving sustainability mechanism for teacher development is being mainstreamed by the Department of Education across three regions (Region 9, 12, and ARMM). Schools, districts, and divisions have adapted and contextualized the implementation of this program considering their own realities and context.

  On June 28-29, 2011, the event provided a forum for the participants to share their experiences and insights on LPP and learn from these experiences as they develop their programs in their respective schools. It also provided a venue to discuss sustainability measures, such as institutional and community support, that needs to be in place for the program to succeed and prosper.

Demo teaching during the LPP Show &Tell event in Dinas, Zamboanga del Sur

- **ICT Program: Myths and Realities**
  September 2011
  EDC took deliberate steps to design and implement an ICT program that combines good practices gleaned from international research as well as learnings from field-level assessments and teacher surveys. The result is a demand-driven, performance-based ICT program that is owned and jointly maintained by DepED, local government units, and individual schools.

  On September 8, 2011, the EQuALLS2 Project shared lessons learned and highlighted factors to consider when implementing similar ICT programs with a wider audience—researchers, development practitioners, academic community, donors, DepED, local stakeholders, and others.

- **PTA Forum**
  October 2011
  A key result area of the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) is the school-based management (SBM) that aims to strengthen school management by giving more decision-making

authority to parents and members of the community. This requires developing new skills for PTAs in governance and management, strategic education improvement planning, and financial accountability.

On October 18–19, 2011, the EQuALLS2 Project shared lessons learned and highlighted approaches for engaging PTAs to support SBM and community education improvement.

- **Educators' Professional Development Program**
  October 2011
  EQuALLS2 supported a systemic effort to improve educator competencies; increase teaching capacity and learner achievements; and improve the quality of instruction in English, science, and math across formal and non-formal basic education programs.

  On October 26, 2011, EQuALLS2 provided an opportunity for participants to experience, learn, and dialogue about a wide array of professional development activities for educators, using innovative approaches and tools as well as a variety of educational materials and technologies.

- **Sustaining Basic Education and Livelihood Improvements: Lessons Learned from EQuALLS2**
  November 2011
  This conference served as the culminating, high-profile, end-of-project sharing event aimed at harnessing the lessons learned from the Documentation and Learning Agenda and highlighting EQuALLS2's accomplishments and results over the life of the project. It was a venue for multi-level education officials and stakeholders to discuss the depth and quality of project's results, the challenges faced, and the sustainability mechanisms established to ensure that successful project interventions are institutionalized and sustained by partner agencies and communities.

Lessons Learned in Implementing a Comprehensive M&E Strategy for Large-Scale Projects with Multiple Implementing Partners

Ongoing dialogue with USAID and partners on a submitted M&E Plan— together with a mid-term evaluation—is necessary and encouraged. EDC worked closely with partners and USAID to define and clarify FACTS indicator definitions. Even with a set of agreed definitions, changes happened during implementation that affected project operations. One example is the counting and reporting on the number of educators trained: number of unique individual teachers trained or number of trainings each teacher received. Though the MIS allowed the project to report on the number of educators trained either way, EDC had to provide technical support to the M&E and MIS teams of partners to address the initial confusion brought about by the change in definition.

USAID conducted a systematic mid-term review (April 20–30, 2009) to ensure that a long-term project such as EQuALLS2 was on track and to recommend mid-term adjustments to strengthen continuing programming. The USAID Office of Education in collaboration with USAID Procurement, Financial Services, and the Program Resources Management teams organized the mid-term review. The review affirmed that EQuALLS2 was addressing critical education needs, was adaptive and responsive to emerging issues, and was making progress towards achieving USAID development goals. The review also highlighted the quality of programming and the competencies and commitment of project staff and implementers.

Recommendations and guidance from the mid-term review led EQuALLS2 to introduce enhancements in its core program interventions, for example, covering whole schools and all barangays; implementing the madrasah assistance program; incorporating innovative strategies for teacher professional development; and expanding options for OSY with more elements toward work-readiness and providing scholarships and post-training support, among others.

The review also facilitated better clarity on management, support, and implementation roles and responsibilities among USAID/OEd, EDC, and the implementing partners. A recommendation on the need to smooth out communication between and among these main project actors, particularly in the area of monitoring and evaluation, helped to foster a culture of shared accountability for achievement of results going forward.

Defining and developing a flexible system that will support the implementation and operation of the M&E Strategic Plan is important and had to be anticipated at the start of the project. Given the project's multi-tiered partnerships and its comprehensive M&E Plan with its various deliverables, EDC had to redefine or add to existing systems and procedures in order to address existing gaps. One example is the data validation exercise the project undertook towards the latter part of the project. During the Regional Inspector General (RIG) audit, it was recommended that EDC establish procedures to oversee and validate partners' performance data. Even though each implementing partner had an existing system in place to check and validate their own data, EDC developed and implemented additional data validation steps and documentation processes to guarantee accuracy of data in the MIS. Another example is the Documentation and Learning component of the M&E Plan. As the project evolved, a Documentation and Learning specialist was hired to develop and implement standards for documenting lessons learned for program improvement.

Creating a flexible system and having the right staff to manage M&E data are essential in accommodating changes in data reporting and analysis needs over time. The EQuALLS2 MIS was originally designed to capture project data for accurate reporting on USAID FACTS Indicators or Strand 1 in the project M&E framework. As the project evolved and data reporting requirements changed, additional features were built into the MIS to accommodate the changes and to make it more flexible to add and extract data sets.

Building the monitoring and evaluation capacity, including documentation and learning capability, of implementing partners and project field staff requires investment of time and resources. Helping staff, at national and local levels, understand the project's M&E system and learn to collect, manage, and analyze data efficiently and correctly is an essential key task of a large complex project such as EQuALLS2. EDC provided ongoing support in building partners' capacity to use M&E tools and the MIS. In addition to M&E Technical Working Group meetings, EDC also facilitated and led trainings and workshops on the use of the tools (e.g., SCOPE, DAP, LAR) as well as on the management of the MIS. Most assessment instruments were developed or adapted through workshops with partners' field staff. It was important to develop partners' sense of ownership for the tools in order for them to use the tools effectively to inform and improve their programming to share with stakeholders and other interested parties.

Having qualitative data collection tools to complement publicly available national statistical data is necessary in order to give a more comprehensive picture of outcomes and possible impact. Measuring the outputs and outcomes of a project using available national data can be limiting. For example, EQuALLS2 found that some data was incomplete (e.g., student National Achievement Test scores were available for only 449 schools out of 845) or totally absent (e.g., there was incomplete or no Phil-IRI data for ARMM schools). Supplementary tools were needed to provide the project with a more comprehensive analysis and understanding of its interventions. For example, the SCOPE tool was used to better understand how project-trained teachers are teaching and how their students are learning.

MANAGEMENT

As the **EQUALLS2 Coordinating Agency**, EDC was responsible for overall project leadership and management. This included providing technical program guidance and management support for a sub-grant portfolio totaling more than $30 million. EDC guided the development of annual work plans and budgets of sub-grant partners with a series of annual technical guidance notes, aligned with the evolution of project strategies and activities. EDC monitored the technical and financial performance of all lead partners and developed and managed the project's communication and outreach system and strategic partnership development efforts. EDC also developed and managed the EQuALLS2 monitoring and evaluation system which included a Learning Agenda that provided opportunities to introduce innovations in response to project implementation challenges.

EDC worked in close collaboration with, and under the guidance of, the USAID Mission Education Team to ensure that the goals and objectives of the program were achieved. EDC and USAID's Office of Education (OEd) worked with the Department of Education and the Department of Education ARMM and other Philippine entities to ensure the coherence and convergence of efforts at the national, regional, and local levels for educational improvement in the three-targeted regions in Mindanao.

Managing Transition Year Sub-Grants

The first year of the EQuALLS2 project was designated by USAID as a transition year, during which time EDC was asked by USAID Philippines to subcontract with several organizations to complete and evaluate the implementation cycles for on-going EQuALLS 1 program activities. EDC issued and managed the transition year sub-grants as outlined in table 14.

Table 14. Sub-grant awardees for transition year

Organization	Activity	Budget	Period of Sub-award
1. Champagnat Community College-Notre Dame of Marbel University (CCC-NDMU)	Accessing Alternative Learning Systems for Out-of-School Youth (OSY)	$175,751	August 1, 2006 to June 15, 2008

Organization	Activity	Budget	Period of Sub-award
2. **Notre Dame Foundation for Charitable Activities, Inc.** – Women in Enterprise Development (NDFCAI-WED)	Accreditation and Equivalency Support Program for Out-of-School Children and Youth	$413,012	August 1 to Dec. 4, 2006
3. **Real World Productions**	Improving English Language Teaching and Learning	$419,057	October 1, 2006 to November 30, 2007
4. **Save the Children**	Assistance for the Comprehensive Educational Development of Mindanao	$2,000,000	November 1, 2006 to October 31, 2008
5. **United Bangsamoro Movement for Peace and Development, Inc.** (UBMP-DI-USM)	OSY Remedial Equivalency and Accreditation Technique for Community Access to Responsive Education	$35,536	August 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007

Another main priority for the EDC team during the transition year was to design a request for applications (RFA) document for organizations interested in contributing to the implementation of the second phase of EQuALLS. Some of the main activities related to developing the RFA included:

- Having consultation meetings with DepED national and DepED ARMM on education and livelihood skills needs and priorities for children and OSYs
- Designing discussions and drafting technical notes for each of the three IRs, to be included in the RFA guidelines
- Compiling a short list of proposed EQuALLS2 municipalities and cities relative to criteria, such as income and poverty indicators, conflict and post-conflict situations, basic education indicators, educational access difficulties, and prevalence of OSCYs
- Building on previous EQuALLS presence and investments
- Having consultation meetings with the USAID Office of Regional Procurement and the Office of Education on RFA-related procurement and programmatic guidelines

The RFA Process

During the second year of the project, EDC issued an RFA to solicit eligible organizations wishing to partner with EDC in implementing

the EQuALLS2 core set of interventions, as defined in the EQuALLS2 Project Description. Interested organizations were requested to detail (i) their interest; (ii) demonstrated organizational, technical, and managerial capacity; (iii) direct or related Mindanao experience; (iv) their ideas for innovation; (v) their commitment to collaborative program implementation; and (vi) their capacity to leverage public-private sector resources.

EDC provided USAID with clear documentation on the steps, procedures, and tools that EDC used to manage the RFA process. In chronological order, these steps included the following:

1. Released the EQuALLS 2 RFA document.
2. Responded to clarifying questions from prospective applicants.
3. Received RFA applications.
4. Reviewed and scored RFA applications.
5. Proposed sub-grantees to USAID with suggested next steps.

Awarding of Sub-grants

Upon approval by USAID, EDC issued four-year sub-grants to International Youth Foundation (IYF), Save the Children, and Synergeia Foundation to serve as EDC's **lead implementing partners**, as well as a separate sub-grant to Petron Foundation, as part of a GDA, for classroom construction and repair.

Table 15. Sub-grant awardees

Lead Implementing Partners	Approved Budget	Start Date
International Youth Foundation	$9,000,000	August 1, 2007
Save The Children	$10,000,000	December 1, 2007
Synergeia Foundation	$7,000,000	August 1, 2007

In addition, **SEAMEO-INNOTECH** was engaged by EDC (through service provider agreements) to play an important technical assistance (TA) role for the duration of the project. SEAMEO's primary TA role involved regular support and quality assurance for EQuALLS2's out-of-school youth programming. Examples follow:

- Technical guidance during start-up cross-results working groups
- TA on design of continuing activities from EQuALLS Phase 1
- Rapid assessment of out-of-school youth program service providers
- TA to out-of-school youth implementation organizations
- TA to out-of-school youth learning and research agenda
- Inputs to the EQuALLS2 mid-term review

- Review out-of-school youth annual work plans
- Inputs to annual planning with partners
- Review of the quality of partners' out-of-school youth programming

Sub-grants Management Process

Due to the size and complexity of EDC's sub-grant portfolio, EDC developed a multi-tiered grants management and support system. EDC's technical and grants management teams provided technical guidance to sub-grantees during program implementation, while conducting regular quality assurance monitoring visits to ensure compliance with project-wide programming, implementation strategies, and the terms and conditions of the EDC sub-grant agreements.

The five main elements of EDC's grants management system included the following.

1. ***Sub-grants Manual***. EDC developed a sub-grants manual defining the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved and detailed discussion of the five functional areas:
   - Finance and Administration
   - Strategic Coordination & Partnerships
   - Technical Programs and Leadership
   - Monitoring and Evaluation
   - Communications

2. ***Quality Assurance Mechanism***. EDC developed a quality assurance mechanism that clarified the purpose, roles, and responsibilities; tasks; and EDC staff responsible for quality assurance in each of the following areas:
   - ***Technical Programs.*** The EDC technical programs team was accountable to ensure that each sub-grantee complied with (i) reaching targets and schedules; (ii) quality of program outcomes; (iii) agreed-upon approaches and work plan; and (iv) EQuALLS2 guidelines and technical standards, for example, RFA, technical notes, partners' workshops, and TWG meetings.

   - ***Financial/Grants.*** The grants team was accountable to ensure (i) conduct of pre-award due diligence checks; (ii) sub-grantee compliance with budget management and financial management standards, and sub-grant agreement terms and conditions; (iii) sub-grantee management of their lower-tier subs; and (iv) budget approval.

The grants team also provided technical guidance and capacity building in the areas of financial management systems, relevant USAID rules and regulations, relevant taxes and local laws, and other areas of expertise relevant to sub-grant management.

- ***Outreach and Communications (O&C)***. The O&C team was accountable to ensure (i) sub-grantee management of project-wide communications systems; (ii) "One Face and One Voice" projection (consistent project-wide messages) with general public and stakeholders; (iii) submission of agreed-upon communication product deliverables (quality, quantity, timeliness); and (iv) compliance with branding and marking guidelines.

A main thrust of the quality assurance process was a commitment from EDC technical and finance staff to provide hands-on guidance and oversight through regularly held technical working groups (TWGs), M&E, and communications meetings; joint review and feedback sessions around sub-grantee quarterly progress reports; facilitation of joint annual planning activities with sub-grantees; monthly field visits; and periodic participation of EDC staff in sub-grantees' activities.

3. ***Quarterly Progress Report (QPR) Review Process***. EDC developed a quarterly progress report review process to guide the technical and grant teams during review of partners' quarterly progress reports. This included the following tasks:
   - Review of accomplishments vs. planned activities for the quarter
   - Review quality of performance
   - Overall analysis and consolidation of technical and grants feedback
   - Final review of analysis and recommendations
   - Transmittal of feedback document to partners
   - One-on-one feedback meeting with each partner

4. ***Annual Planning Process***. At the end of each performance year, EDC facilitated an annual planning workshop with all of the lead implementing partners (and USAID). The workshop consisted of two to three days of reflection and planning exercises, resulting in the development of an annual work plan and budget by each lead partner that fit into the macro annual plan for the project.

5. ***Quarterly Financial Reviews***. EDC also developed an internal audit program used by the grants team when reviewing quarterly financial transactions.

6. ***Community Incentives Grant (CIG) Guidelines*** for project-wide implementation of community incentives grant. Partners took the lead in managing these grants following the approved CIG guidelines. The guidelines consist of two parts:
   - **Technical** – This involves the capacity-building interventions needing to take place before an award is made, including project proposal preparation, evaluation, and approval process.
   - **Financial** – This involves CIG fund management requirements, for example, the opening of bank accounts, installation of financial management systems, and implementation of recording and reporting systems.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Quarterly sub-grant financial monitoring reviews and site visits, independently by the EDC grants and together with the ED technical team, is important. This was particularly important given the amount of the sub-agreement awards and the related high volume of financial transactions. Quarterly reviews allowed sub-grantees to address issues in a timely manner. Sub-grantees came to view EDC's quarterly reviews and visits in a positive light based on the supportive nature of the visits and the technical guidance and recommendations for improvements that were provided. The site visits also allowed EDC to validate the presence of on-site activities and materials vis-à-vis information provided in sub-grantee quarterly narrative reports and supporting financial documents.

Joint quarterly review of sub-grantee quarterly progress reports by EDC finance and technical teams should be followed by one-on-one feedback meetings with each sub-grantee. The joint review enabled both finance and technical teams to share and discuss sub-grantee accomplishments and spending against approved work plans and budgets. Quarterly one-on-one meetings with each sub-grant partner ensured regular opportunities to clarify feedback, troubleshoot challenges, and agree on improvements needed to strengthen programming and resource management.

Grants management workshops and capacity-building interventions organized by EDC helped to address common areas of concern identified during quarterly financial reviews. These workshops also promoted valuable cross sharing and learning regarding successful practices among

sub-grant partners.

On-going threats of violence was a main challenge to managing project operations within a fragile context. Due to the project's focus on the country's most fragile communities, there were daily threats of violence, kidnapping for ransom (KFR), and other menaces that negatively affected the ability of project staff and beneficiaries to travel to and from scheduled activities. EDC conducted thorough security planning, including a complete project-level and contextualized security plan, training, protocols, and focal persons, and maintained clear security protocols and regular security updates for field staff working within the conflict environment. EDC regularly required suspension of community level activities in communities in order to assure a safe environment for beneficiaries, practitioners, and other community stakeholders. In some cases, program participants were transported out of conflict-affected communities (impacting the project's budget) to enable continuity of the various training and capacity-building activities.

Strategic Partnerships

Forging effective strategic partnerships with host government agencies, local and international public and private organizations, and other donors was an important success factor in EDC's overall management approach for EQuALLS2. Four distinct and inter-related objectives were pursued by EDC in forging these strategic partnerships:

1. To ensure alignment of project objectives and approaches with national policy for sustainability and to generate local ownership, implementation support, and counterpart resources in the case of host government agencies, such as DepEd, DepEd ARMM, TESDA and the city and municipal governments

2. To complement project resources and approaches, and minimize potential duplication of efforts, in the case of AusAID BEAM and the U.S. Peace Corps

3. To tap available local expertise, build local capacity, and provide mechanisms for post-project sustainability, in the case of local academic and research institutions and service providers

4. To enlarge USAID's project investment and engage local institutions in long-term investment in addressing education issues in the Philippines, in the case of the private sector institutions

These partnerships included:

- **Key host country government agencies**, such as the Department of Education, DepED ARMM, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and the various city and municipal governments in project sites.
    - The project's mechanism at the national level for ensuring effective partnership and coordination with key host government agencies was the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), which was mandated to meet twice a year. The PAC was co-chaired by USAID and DepED, and included as members the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and DepED ARMM.

- **U.S. Government agencies**, such as the U.S. Peace Corps (USPC) and the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) of the U.S. military.
    - EQuALLS2 and USPC collaborated in improving teachers' English proficiency through USPC's English language camps and in training PTAs for preparation and management of small projects.
    - JSOTF and EQuALLS2 collaborated on the construction of 10 classrooms in five of the most conflict-affected and high-risk municipalities of Basilan and Sulu. JSOTF also assisted EQuALLS2 in transporting almost half a million books and science and math kits to EQuALLS2-assisted schools.

- **Other donor projects**, such as AusAID's Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM) project. EQuALLS2 and BEAM collaborated on the joint implementation of teacher training in science and math in common beneficiary schools and also together piloted an early grades reading improvement activity.

- **U.S.-based foundations**, such as Brothers Brother Foundation (BBF), and the **corporate social responsibility arms of private local corporations**, such as Petron Foundation, Microsoft Philippines, and the National Book Store Foundation. (Details of these partnerships are provided in the Global Development Alliance section below).

- **Academic and research institutions**, such as SEAMEO-INNOTECH; the UP National Institute for Science and Mathematics

Education Development; Mindanao-based academic institutions, such as Ateneo de Zamboanga; and various Notre Dame University-affiliated colleges. SEAMEO-INNOTECH and EQuALLS2 collaborated on developing effective approaches to out-of school youth alternative learning system (ALS) programs and on teacher training.

Global Development Alliance Partnerships

Since 2001, USAID has promoted the Global Development Alliance (GDA) business model that breaks with traditional development assistance approaches and sets forth a new way of doing business. Alliances are cultivated with the philosophy that social and economic conditions in poor and transitional countries are improved in more effective and sustainable ways when public and private sectors work together, and there is a sense of shared responsibility among local and international businesses and donors.

EQuALLS2 embraced the USAID GDA model and was able to develop several successful public-private partnerships (PPP) with U.S. and Philippine-based businesses interested in collaborating with USAID on education improvement efforts in Mindanao. These GDA partners valued USAID's matching funds, development expertise, local networks, and the related credibility gained through an alliance with USAID.

EQuALLS2's private sector partners generously contributed educational services and resources to the following areas of education improvement across targeted communities in Mindanao:

- Improved school infrastructures for increased student access to quality education – 120 classrooms built and 480 classrooms repaired.

- Appropriate books and supplies for more effective teaching and learning –2,116,701 supplementary books and materials, including 48,000 dictionaries distributed.

- Relevant and effective teacher trainings, including a special ICT teacher training – 1,402 teachers trained in basic computer literacy, and 348 teachers trained in intermediate computer literacy.

EDC's four public-private partnerships included:

- **$35.7 million dollar partnership with Brothers Brother Foundation** (Pittsburg, PA), providing approximately 2 million high-quality textbooks, readers, audio books and teaching aids to elementary school teachers and students

- **$2.5 million dollar partnership with Petron Foundation** (Petron Corporation Philippines, oil and gas provider) providing classroom construction and repair

- **$400,000 dollar partnership with National Book Store** (Manila), providing 48,000 dictionaries to elementary school classrooms

- **$60,000 dollar partnership with Microsoft Corporation**, providing introductory computer training for 1,402 elementary school teachers

National Book Store founder Socorro Ramos and former U.S. Ambassador Kristie Kenney signing a Memorandum of Agreement

The successful EQuALLS2 GDA experience used the following approaches to implement effective public-private partnerships:

- **Central focus on GDA strategy and objectives from project inception**
  A clear articulation of the project's GDA strategy needs to be a deliberate part of start-up and on-going project overview presentations and orientation sessions delivered to government counterparts, potential business partners, implementing partners, and local stakeholders.

- **Emphasis on shared responsibility and accountability to development objectives**
  Project presentations need to include a strong emphasis on the importance of shared responsibility and accountability, to project objectives and long-term development of communities, between the project implementation team and the local government officials, business community, and community members.

- **Proactive identification of potential local and international business partners**
  Potential private sector business partners need to be identified and approached, both locally and internationally during project start-up and throughout project implementation.

- **Securing high-level GDA champions to attract attention to the program**
  GDA champions composed of high-level actors, such as the American ambassador, USAID mission director, government ministers, and governors, need to be solicited and developed in order to highlight attention and increase prestige associated with businesses joining hands as partners with the American Embassy and USAID on development programs.

- **High-profile outreach to highlight successful GDA partnerships**
  High-level press coverage in international, national, and local newspapers of public-private partnerships and achievements greatly increases awareness and attention to the excitement and benefits of being involved in USAID GDA partnerships.

OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS

Due to the high-profile nature of EQuALLS2—as the U.S. Government's cornerstone assistance effort for education improvement in conflict-affected Mindanao—the project was fortunate to have a robust and well-resourced outreach and communications unit. EQuALLS2 used a comprehensive set of Outreach and Communications (O&C) strategies to provide up-to-date progress on the project's diverse set of education and youth livelihoods activities taking place on a daily basis in Mindanao.

The project's O&C efforts were particularly successful due to the involvement and backing of the U.S. ambassador, USAID director, Philippines education secretary, and visiting U.S. diplomats, including Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Regular support from these high-level figures greatly assisted the project's ability to build strong relationships and engage with national, regional, and local government officials and education stakeholders to effectively project successes and concerns.

To address and reach a large Philippine population as well as a global development arena, the project used the following kinds of messaging approaches:

- Regular newspaper articles in the national and local press
- Periodic television programming
- Regular weekly highlight submissions to USAID
- High-quality (award-winning) program photographs
- USAID and EQuALLS2 branding at project-supported activities
- Development of an interactive website and resource portal
- Project newsletters
- National and regional dissemination events to share products and successful approaches developed and tested by the project
- Donor and stakeholder reporting

With a project of the size and complexity of EQuALLS2, involving important relationships with multi-tiered government and private sector partners, EDC worked to develop a "One Face and One Voice" communication strategy to ensure common communication of project objectives and accomplishments by the many project implementers. This included:

- Providing guidance and ensuring compliance with USAID-EQuALLS2 branding and messaging guidelines
- Providing technical support to project implementers on documentation and reporting of important events, highlights, and milestones, and facilitating dissemination in different media outlets

- Ensuring timely development and submission of programmed products, including unscheduled requirements from USAID
- Fostering unity among the lead implementing partners through regular internal communication and establishment of an outreach and communications technical working group

Highlights Tools and Products

EQuALLS2 Branding Template

The "One Face and One Voice" project communications objective was strengthened through project-wide use of an agreed upon branding template to be used on all project-related products. This promoted EQuALLS2's identity as a bilateral partnership of the Philippine and U.S. governments, as follows:

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE | DepED DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ARMM | TESDA

EQuALLS2 PROJECT EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCESS FOR LEARNING AND LIVELIHOOD SKILLS PROJECT

Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao | Region IX | Region XII

EQuALLS2 newsletter

EDC and its lead implementing partners contributed to a project-wide newsletter that was distributed to all project-supported schools, community learning centers, and partner organizations. The newsletter highlighted stakeholder success stories and best practices to facilitate sharing across partner organizations.

EQuALLS2 website (equalls.edc.org)

The EQuALLS2 website initially served as a mere repository of basic project information and weekly highlights for USAID. It was revamped to include a real-time activity calendar and map that proved useful to USAID and project partners as a dynamic tool for implementation monitoring and decision-making on site visits. The website also became a central portal for partner sharing of implementation guidelines and other key project information, weekly developments, municipal accomplishments, and communication and learning products.

Newspaper coverage and award-winning project photos

EQuALLS2 stories were regularly published, posted, and aired on local

and national multimedia, including two front-page stories on leading Philippine national dailies. Professionally produced EQuALLS2 photos populated the USAID Philippines website, won top awards in USAID's global Frontlines photo contest, and were used in several global USAID and EDC publications.

mb.com.ph
Manila Bulletin Publishing Corporation

HOME News Business Lifestyle Entertainment Sports AP News
Main News World Regional Motoring Opinion Education Environment

Mindanao education plan gains thrust

By NONOY E. LACSON
October 5, 2011, 3:28pm

ZAMBOANGA CITY, Philippines – The Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills Phase 2 (EQuALLS2) project continues to gain momentum in its quest to improve the quality of teaching implemented by teachers assigned in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao.

Operating under the United States Agency for International Development

EDUCATION AND HOME

Teachers agog over new book shopping experience

(The Philippine Star) Updated June 18, 2009 12:00 AM Comments (0)

MANILA, Philippines – There's a new and fun way to put good books in teachers' hands to better cultivate young Filipino minds — by organizing book shopping events for teachers.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through its Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQuALLS2) Project, recently organized one in Lutayan, Cotabato City, in a warehouse turned book center.

Fifty-one public elementary school teachers from the municipality had the time of their lives poring over

Inquirer Headlines / Nation

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Mindanao teachers stick to English in camp

Philippine Daily Inquirer
First Posted 04:38:00 05/30/2009

Filed Under: Education, Language

MANILA, Philippines?Smiling, the second-grade teacher rested from a game that challenged her to fully use her English language skills.

Celema Lechonsito of the Manili Elementary School in Lutayan, Sultan Kudarat, traveled all the way to Mactan, Cebu, to join 132 other grade school teachers from Mindanao in a 12-day camp that promised to help them improve their English in time for the school opening in June.

The English Language Camp helped the teacher-campers practice their English language skills using educational games and other activities on persuasive speaking, interviewing, using idioms, reading and retelling stories, creating and enacting newscasts, hosting, debating, creative writing, role playing, conversation, and vocabulary building.

PHOTO CONTEST - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Rojessa Tiamson-Saceda, EQuALLS2 Project

This image earned top-10 honors in the FrontLines photo contest. Elementary students at Tetuan Central Elementary School in Zamboanga City, in the conflict-affected Mindanao region of the Philippines, work intently on a math project, guided by a textbook from USAID/Philippines' EQuALLS2 Project. The book, one of more than a million donated by the partnership to Mindanao public elementary schools, is designed to make math fun and easy to learn. February 2010.

Done Internet 100%

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Many young people in Mindanao are still not leading the easiest of lives due to long standing conflict and poverty, but the outlook is now brighter for a half million children and youth who were fortunate to be touched by the USAID EQuALLS2 project. The project's community-level impact has been felt through the successful delivery of tangible results. EQuALLS2 has provided safe and productive learning options for children and youth, increased access to quality public schools or Madrasah education, provided high school equivalency certificate programs for out-of-school youth, and structured opportunities for youth to learn livelihood skills that can lead to expanded income pathways.

Children and youth in more than 1,000 communities are enjoying positive learning environments brought about by the project's building and repair of over 2,000 classrooms and community learning centers; provision of more than 2 million supplementary books and other learning materials; and improved instruction of English, science, and math through the project's content and pedagogical training for over 38,000 educators. EQuALLS2 granted close to $1 million for education improvement projects managed by PTAs and other community groups, and more than 110,000 out-of-school youth took advantage of project-supported, flexible and relevant basic education and workforce development programs.

Communities in Mindanao stand to benefit long term from the project's systems-level impact resulting from strengthened organizational development, management skills, education planning, and project management capacity for over 1,300 local school boards and Parent Teacher Associations. Some of these organizations are now able to track progress and plans for education and skills improvement for in-school and out-of-school learners, using education performance indicators that were agreed upon by community representatives, local DepED, and other government representatives.

Additionally, 1,869 project-supported teachers and learning facilitators, and their learning partners, are teaching better as a result of the continuing professional development they experience as they learn from each other and apply their knowledge and skills in the classroom. This kind of systemic support for teachers will continue to improve learning outcomes for 465,574 school children in 845 schools and will likely spread through DepEd support to additional schools across Mindanao.

Finally, teachers from 286 schools who benefited from the project-supported Microsoft computer literacy training are now able submit DepED-required computerized grades, lesson plans, and administrative reports.

The project's policy-level impact is demonstrated by the formal adoption of EQuALLS2 systems and practices and expressed commitment of partner institutions to sustain the EQuALLS2 project initiatives. LGUs and LSBs, who have a better appreciation of their mandate, have passed resolutions adopting participatory education and skills planning processes, and allocations of their Special Education Funds (SEF) and local development funds are now based on approved municipal education agendas.

As a result of DepED's strong ownership, innovations, tools, and processes introduced by EQuALLS2 are now being expanded. For example, DepED Region 9 issued a memorandum directing the training of school heads on the SCOPE tool for use in observing classes, and DepED Region 12 expanded the LPP for application up to the secondary level, to cover not only English but all other learning areas. As an incentive for teachers to pursue their own professional development, DepED Region 12 also forged a partnership with local Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) for accrediting hours used by learning facilitators for coaching or mentoring other teachers.

In conclusion, EQuALLS2 highlights the following key lessons learned and recommendations:

A participatory community engagement approach that is inclusive of all local education stakeholders is critical for developing a sense of shared responsibilities and for generating local support for school-based management and education improvement. Community engagement efforts must also deliberately include mechanisms that systematically address out-of-school-youth education and skills improvement needs.

Organizational strengthening of PTAs and LSBs based on a systematic capacity-building needs assessment is necessary for meaningful PTA/LSB participation and support to school-based management and education improvement. To achieve this goal, DepED's policy, technical, and financial support is needed at the division, regional, and national levels. PTA capacity building should continue, while strengthening of LSBs should now focus more on networking, advocacy, and resource mobilization, in addition to continuing to enhance their governance and management, education improvement planning, and financial management skills. The EQuALLS2 project has developed resources

and installed systems, such as the BERC, that can be replicated for this purpose.

Educator professional development is likely to produce stronger results with a more intentional, content-focused strengthening of a critical number of teachers who are committed to sharing their knowledge and skills through school-based, peer-learning mechanisms. Strategies that address the needs of more skilled learning facilitators and weaker teachers or learning partners, as well as an enabling policy environment, are recommended to ensure sustainability of this strategy.

Donated supplementary books and materials can effectively enhance teacher training and classroom instruction when distribution is based on demand-driven strategies. Equally important to the provision of materials support is structured learning for teachers to further deepen conceptual understanding of English, math, and science content.

Successful programs for out-of-school youth need to be able to respond to diverse learning and skills needs, while ensuring that youth are able to simultaneously fulfill family and economic obligations. Successful programs for OSCY also need to include post-training support, such as employment linkages and entrepreneurship training. Relevant offerings should also integrate work readiness skills that participants can transfer and apply in different work settings.

In addition to establishing an **efficient, easy to access, management information system (MIS), a flexible (evolving) documentation and learning process should be developed** to facilitate a more comprehensive picture of a project's depth, quality, and impact and to better enable data-based decision-making for program improvement.

Even as the EQuALLS2 Project comes to a close, its experiences and lessons learned continue to be relevant to USAID's 2011 Global Education Strategy. The project's focus on education quality, including teacher proficiency in content knowledge and instructional practices, and cognitive skills that young people need to prosper in the job market are also recognized as key elements of the global USAID education strategy. Increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015 is the third goal (of three) in USAID's new Education Strategy 2011–2015.

The challenge of providing increased access to millions of learners is underscored by the fact that over 70 million primary schoolage children are not in school, and nearly 40 million live in countries affected by armed conflict. Enabling increased access to education in areas of con-

flict (such as Mindanao) is critically important because education is not only a human right, but it also can mitigate the effects of fragility and conflict; it is therefore critical to restore education venues, services, and system capacity for children and youth.

The project's ability to successfully implement education and youth development programs during some of the most challenging years of insecurity and conflict in Mindanao is based to a large extent on building social capital with community members and Mindanao government officials as an integral part of building the government's capacity to deliver improved education services.

The ultimate measure of the project's success is the extent to which promising project interventions are institutionalized—based on ownership from government, non-government, and private sector partners—and brought to scale through sustained efforts by partner agencies and communities. Sharing the challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations related to EQuALLS2 achievements of programmatic depth, quality, and sustainability has been the basis for this Life of Project Report.

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