

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT

Division: SESS

TA 4524-PHI: Development of Basic Education in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)			Amount Approved: \$375,000	
			Revised Amount: N/A	
Executing Agency: Department of Education, ARMM (DepEd-ARMM)		Source of Funding: Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)	Amount Undisbursed: \$20,661.77	Amount Utilized: \$354,338.23
TA Approval Date: 23 Dec 2004	TA Signing Date: 9 Feb 2005	Fielding of First Consultants:  15 Aug 2005	TA Completion Date Original: 31 Mar 2006	Actual: 31 Dec 2007
			Account Closing Date Original: 31 Mar 2006	Actual: 31 Jan 2008

### **Description**

The advisory technical assistance (TA) was designed to provide a comprehensive framework for the planning and development of education in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). At that time, ADB place a high priority on development in Mindanao, in light of the high poverty incidence and low levels of social development. The poorest part of Mindanao is the ARMM which was created in 1991. Muslims form 76% of the population of around 3 million. The poverty incidence is the highest in the Philippines, almost double the national average. A long history of deprivation and under-funding has resulted in levels of educational development that fall far below the Millennium Development Goals, and well below national achievements. The elementary net enrollment rate is 82% compared with the national average of 96%. The cohort survival rate at the elementary level is only 25%. Most children in ARMM attend public schools, but many also attend madrasah for religious instructions. As madrasah generally offer only religious education, graduates have difficulty finding employment. A small number of madrasah offer the national basic education curriculum along with religious education, and are accredited by the Government.

To prepare a solid foundation for improving education in ARMM, the ARMM Government requested a TA from ADB to help the Department of Education, ARMM (DepEd-ARMM) prepare a comprehensive plan for basic education development.

### **Expected Impact, Outcome and Outputs**

The expected impact of the TA was improved access to, and quality of, basic education in ARMM. The expected outcome was improved capability in DepEd-ARMM to manage the basic education sector effectively. The expected output of the TA was an ARMM Ten-Year Basic Education Development Plan, 2005–2015, including division education development plans (DEDPs) for the eight divisions and guidelines for the decentralization of education in ARMM. The Ten-Year Plan was to focus upon closing the education gap between ARMM and the rest of the country, thereby providing a sound basis for the formulation of future investment programs.

### **Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities**

The TA was financed by a grant of \$375,000 from AusAID, administered by ADB, and provided 5 person months of international and 10 person months of national consulting services. The TA also funded workshops to develop the DEDPs and a series of roundtable discussions on policy issues, especially the drafting of the new Basic Education Act for ARMM. The TA was relevant as there was a strong felt need for a cohesive framework covering regional education development among both Government and donors. A recent influx of funding into ARMM had led to multiple, splintered donor efforts that the government had difficulty in coordinating. This situation was unsatisfactory for all parties. As well, some donors stipulated that future investment would be dependent upon a sound analysis of needs and a development plan identifying strategies and funding priorities.

The TA operated in a difficult environment. The challenges facing teachers and officials in communication and travel made coordination of TA activities difficult. In addition, the ARMM Secretary of Education was removed not long after the TA began and no replacement was appointed. Instead, one of the district superintendents acted as the Secretary in an officer-in-charge capacity but remained based in his division. In addition, the TA was beset by a tragedy in February 2006, when a serious car accident resulted in the death of the national education planning consultant and injuries to two other consultants, including the international team leader. He subsequently withdrew his services from the TA. This led to a long delay in TA implementation and a curtailing of the activities in line with the remaining budget. The consulting firm managed events surrounding the accident well, but found it difficult to identify suitable replacements at short notice. As the TA was already more than halfway through, they proposed not to replace the team leader with another international consultant. ADB agreed on condition that the former team leader would be responsible for the writing of the education plan. A new national consultant was recruited but she did not have the same expertise on ARMM education as the previous consultant. A successful donor forum was held in January 2007 following the final tripartite review. The draft final report was not completed in time for the tripartite review as

expected. The report subsequently received, in May 2007, was of poor quality. The consulting firm therefore engaged an international consultant to rewrite the report. The final version was much improved, but took time to re-work, and was submitted only in November 2007. The performance of the consulting firm is therefore rated partly satisfactory.

The EA provided support to the consultants and engaged actively in the work of drafting the new Basic Education Act. At division level, there was commitment to the development of the DEDPs. A major drawback, however, was the absence of a formally-appointed Secretary of Education for the duration of the TA which hampered commitment to the TA at the regional level. Within these constraints, the performance of the EA is rated satisfactory.

An inception and final review missions were undertaken. The midterm review was cancelled because of the car accident. Two other planned missions did not receive security clearances, so meetings were held in Manila with ARMM-DepEd staff instead, including the officer-in-charge (Secretary). The performance of ADB was satisfactory.

#### **Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome**

The TA achieved the most critical of the outputs, namely (i) the formulation of a Regional Basic Education Development Plan (RBEDP) for ARMM; (ii) development of DEDPs for the eight divisions; and (iii) guidelines for the decentralization of education management developed, in the form of a draft Basic Education Act. The RBEDP developed three goals for ARMM Dep-ED, and under these goals identified 10 key result areas. It also identified the key challenges for ARMM education and 10-year targets, including interim indicators. The low participation and completion rates in primary education are identified as the major challenges. The greatest benefit of the TA arose from the bottom-up approach taken to the development of the RBEDP. Each division was assisted to develop its own DEDP and database by assessing the current state of education development in each division through data gathering and analysis; identifying the critical needs; developing strategies to address these needs; identifying available financial resources; prioritizing the needs within these resources and developing realistic targets; and finally, developing a 10-year division-wide development plan to achieve these targets. This task proved much more challenging than anticipated, not only because of the daunting logistical and travel and communication obstacles, but also because division officials were accustomed to a system that is highly centralized. None had any experience of analyzing education statistics or formulating plans at a local level. A costing template for divisions to use in estimating their plans was also developed. Although the DEDPs are not sophisticated, the process of DEDP development was enriching for division officials. The commitment of division staff, including the officer-in-charge (Secretary), was evident. The division databases and the DEDPs provide a good basis for further work at division level.

The final report contains useful information and data, but more detailed analysis of regional priorities, strategies and projected costs is needed. The TA consultants spent considerable time drafting a new Basic Education Act with the EA, which diverted attention from the task of completing these aspects of the RBEDP in greater depth.

The TA outcome indicators were that the RBEDP would be updated every 5 years, and that DepEd-ARMM staff would develop and cost education plans independently. This will require a more adequate education management information system, as well as further capacity development for DepEd-ARMM staff.

#### **Overall Assessment and Rating**

The TA can be rated partly successful. Although all divisions produced DEDPs and a regional plan was produced, further work is required to refine the planning priorities, targets, and projected costs. The TA was successful as a first step in building planning capacity at division level, particularly in education data gathering and analysis; the use of education indicators in planning; strategy and plan development; and the use of the division costing template. The TA also made an important contribution to the development of the proposed Basic Education Act by facilitating the process of reaching consensus, and setting up a working group to harmonize the existing laws.

#### **Major Lessons**

(i) The development of a Basic Education Plan using a participatory, bottom-up approach requires considerably more time and resources, including consultancy inputs, than a more traditional approach; (ii) While a participatory approach may build capacity at the local level, it will be time-consuming and may not deliver a useable final product; (iii) When operating in difficult geographical areas, adequate resources must be allocated to cover higher than usual costs arising from unpredictable security and the limited means for communication and travel; (iv) Strong, continuing commitment at EA senior levels to plan development should be ensured, as this will determine successful plan adoption and implementation, as well as institutionalization of the planning process.

#### **Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions**

There is an urgent need for comprehensive upgrading of basic education in the ARMM. Bilateral donors such as AusAID will continue their involvement and are using the RBEDP as the overall framework for planning future assistance at the regional level. The DEDPs can also form the basis for more detailed local development plans under new support programs. An important step will be establishing clearer priorities among the different challenges, within the existing funding and resource limits, to determine what is achievable within a given time frame.

