

**INDEPENDENT COMPLETION REVIEW OF THE  
PHILIPPINES RESPONSE TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' AND  
MUSLIM EDUCATION (PRIME) PROGRAM**

**FINAL REPORT**

**Susan Atkins (Team Leader)**

**Kaye Bysouth**

**Jeanne Illo**

**Ten Bellosillo**

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## Initiative Summary

<b>Initiative Name</b>			
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Preparation of the Independent Completion Review (ICR) has involved consultations with a broad range of GoP and GoA stakeholders, as well as external stakeholders. The Review Team has been briefed and informed throughout the mission by relevant Australian Embassy, Manila staff and the consultant team working with PRIME. The team has had detailed discussions with DepEd staff at Central, Region, Division and school level, including field visits to Regions I, II, IV-B, X, XII and CAR. The team has also met with a range of representatives of civil society organisation, tribal councils and communities. The Review Team wishes to thank all stakeholders who gave freely of their time in discussing progress in PRIME and the future for IP and Muslim education. We also wish to express our great appreciation to Australian Embassy, Manila and PRIME staff who managed a complex and difficult schedule with patience and fortitude.

## Author's Details

Susan Atkins (Team Leader)  
M: +614144379708 (Australia)  
M: +639294955084 (Philippines)  
Email: [susanatkins35@yahoo.com](mailto:susanatkins35@yahoo.com)

Kaye A Bysouth  
T +61 (2) 44745510 M +61 (0) 429079026  
Email: [bysouth@acr.net.au](mailto:bysouth@acr.net.au)

Jeanne Ilo  
M: +639209052736  
Email: [jeanne.illo@gmail.com](mailto:jeanne.illo@gmail.com)

Ten Bellosillo  
M: +639189220344  
Email: [ten\\_bellosillo@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ten_bellosillo@yahoo.co.uk)

## Disclaimer:

This report reflects the views of the Evaluation team, rather than those of the Government of Australia or of the Government of the Philippines.

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## List of Acronyms

ACCESSs	A Community and Child Centered Education System
ADEP	Ancestral Domain Education Plan
ADM	Alternative Delivery Modes
AD-SIP	Ancestral Domain-based School Improvement Plan
ALS	Alternative Learning System
ALIVE	Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education
BALS	Bureau of Alternative Learning System
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BESRA	Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda
BEST	Basic Education Sector Transformation
BIAP	BESRA Implementation and Accountability Plan
CAR	Cordillera Administrative Region
CEIP	Community Education Improvement Plan
CO	Central Office
CO-MEPA	Central Office Monitoring, Evaluation and Plan Adjustment
CO-PIP	Central Office Program Implementation Plan
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability
CR-SIP	Culture Responsive School Improvement Plan
CSEIP	Community-School Education Improvement Plans
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	OECD- Development Assistance Committee
DBM	Department of Budget and Management
DEDP	Division Education Development Plan
DepEd	Department of Education
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DO	Division Office
DO 62, s.2011	National Indigenous Peoples' Education Policy Framework
DRIP	Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
EBEIS	Enhanced Basic Education Information System
EDPITAF	Educational Development Projects Implementing Task Force
EFA	Education for All
ExeCom	Executive Committee
FBPO	Field-based Program Officer
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAD	Gender and Development
GoA	Government of Australia
GoP	Government of the Republic of the Philippines
ICR	Independent Completion Review
IKSP	Indigenous Knowledge, Systems and Practices
IP	Indigenous Peoples
IPC	Institute of Philippine Culture
IPEd	Indigenous Peoples' Education
IPO	Indigenous Peoples' Organisation
IPRA	Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act
IpsEO	Indigenous Peoples' Education Office
LRMDS	Learning Resource Management and Development System
LGU	Local Government Unit
ManCom	Management Committee
MC	Managing Contractor
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEIR	Review of DepEd's Muslim Education Initiatives
MEPA	Monitoring and Evaluation Plan Adjustment
MOOE	Maintenance Operating and Other Expenses
MSC	Most Significant Change Stories
MTB-MLE	Mother Tongue-Based Multi-Lingual Education
NCIP	National Commission on Indigenous Peoples

NCMF	National Commission on Muslim Filipinos
NGO	Non Government Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OME	Office of Madrasah Education
OPS	Office of Planning Service
PDED	Project Development and Evaluation Division
PDP	Philippines Development Plan
Php	Philippine Peso
PPD	Planning and Programming Division
PRIME	Philippines Response to Indigenous Peoples' and Muslim Education
PWD	People with disabilities
QAI	Quality at Implementation
REDP	Regional Education Development Plan
RSD	Research and Statistics Division
SBM	School Based Management
SIP	School Improvement Plan
TA	Technical Assistance

## Executive Summary

The Philippines Response to Indigenous Peoples' and Muslim Education Program (PRIME) (2011 – 2014) is a collaborative effort of the Government of the Philippines (GoP) and the Government of Australia (GoA) to respond to the specific challenges of disadvantaged indigenous Peoples' (IP) and Muslim communities in the Philippines and to ensure that these communities have equitable access to quality basic education. The program was intended to build upon and scale up support activities for IP and Muslim education that were initially developed as part of the Australia funded Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM) project that concluded in 2009. The PRIME Program was also viewed by DepEd as a significant contributor to the implementation of the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA).

The PRIME program aimed to test mechanisms:

- (i) to encourage increased demand for educational services in disadvantaged IP and Muslim communities (Demand side);
- (ii) to enable the Philippines Department of Education (DepEd) to continuously provide accessible, culturally and linguistically appropriate, policy driven, sustainable and quality education to IP and Muslim communities (Supply side); and,
- (iii) to promote positive changes in the attitudes and perceptions of internal and external stakeholders to IP and Muslim identity, culture and education. (Enabling)

The PRIME Program has supported initiatives in DepEd in ten regions and twenty-four schools divisions.

The Independent Completion Review (ICR) has involved an extensive document review and consultations with a broad range of GoP and GoA stakeholders, as well as external stakeholders. The team has had detailed discussions with DepEd staff at Central, Region, Division and school level, including field visits to Regions I, II, IVB, X, XII and CAR.

### Overall Findings

#### Relevance

The ICR determined that the overall PRIME program goal and objectives remain relevant to Philippine Indigenous Peoples' and Muslim communities. The commitment of both the Government of the Philippines and the Government of Australia to achieving equitable access in quality basic education for the most disadvantaged and marginalised remains high and is well supported by: i) the GoP legislation; ii) the DepEd policy environments, iii) the Australian governments Philippine Education Sector Strategy 2013-23 and iv) as part of the forthcoming GoA funded BEST program of development assistance. However, it is important the findings of this ICR in terms of policy implementation and the lessons learned from the implementation of the PRIME program, are used to inform the continued operationalisation of these policies and as well as the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro.

The Theory of Change remains valid but requires ongoing support and capacity development, especially on the supply side, to take account of the competing priorities and capacity constraints of the DepEd. This is especially the case given the highly variable capacity of the different IP and Muslim communities to be able to meaningfully engage with an organisation of the size of the DepEd particularly when the organisation is undergoing significant change as part of larger education reform efforts.

#### Effectiveness

PRIME has established a significant base that should be leveraged by the DepEd as it implements RA9155 through the rationalisation plan, and the K to 12 curriculum in order to maintain the emphasis on inclusive education, especially for IP and Muslim learners and students with special needs. This includes building on established programs and projects where PRIME has demonstrated gains (e.g. in Region – CAR, Region I, La Union Division and Region X). The grant facility for support to school / community programs and projects is

validated as being an effective mechanism to stimulate demand for education within communities and to commence the process of raising awareness within schools of the differing needs of IP and Muslim learners and their communities. The Review Team found many examples where IP and Muslim communities testified to strengthened awareness and perception of 'self worth' as a result of improvements in the teaching and learning environment, funded by PRIME. Lessons learned include more focussed and contextualised utilisation of grants and participation of IP/Muslim communities in the planning and implementation.

There is also emerging evidence that PRIME has increased consciousness within DepEd (at all levels) regarding the key factors that enable and inhibit access to quality education for IP/Muslim communities and of the types of strategies that are effective to increase participation in schooling.

Nevertheless, the generation of sustained community demand and an on-going partnership between communities and schools requires a long-term effort. PRIME was able to make its greatest contributions to sustainable generation of community demand where there were strong, pre-existing relationships between the school and the community elders. In other words, solid school/community partnerships need time, and long-term support, in order to develop.

The ICR found, across all sites visited, increased capacity for evidence based planning for policy implementation through the use and adoption of the M&E and planning technology (MEPA) and considers this to be a major achievement of PRIME. The MEPA has proven to be an effective tool for increasing the capacity of the schools, divisions and regions to understand the SBM policy, at the core of RA9155 and to appreciate the process.

### **Efficiency**

The shortened timeframe for PRIME – 39 months as opposed to the original proposition of five years – was impractical given the need to generate demand amongst the most marginalised and underserved communities and the need to shift attitudes in the largest government department in the Philippines. As such the enduring and direct benefits to IP and Muslim learners beyond the level of developing a supportive policy environment and dialogue varies significantly across the program sites of implementation and in the quality of the project outcomes and outputs.

In general the ICR found the technical assistance and expertise to be of a good quality, and provided a much needed stopgap solution to the lack of absorptive capacity of the DepEd. However, further support for DepEd is required if it is to source and build adequate expertise across all regions/divisions/schools and communities to leverage PRIME's achievements and continue to meaningfully engage with IP and Muslim communities.

A range of inefficiencies were detected in the way in which the grants mechanism was administered using the DepEd structures and systems. A number of ICR recommendations address these inefficiencies. There are also specific areas where on-going support is recommended to generate a return on the PRIME investment and to avoid breaches of 'Do No Harm' principles.

### **Sustainability**

The PRIME program aimed to assist DepEd to identify, design and implement a range of basic education programs and services that respond to the unique requirements and "demands" of children belonging to disadvantaged IP and Muslim communities with the goal of improving the quality of, and equity in, basic learning outcomes for these learners. Key areas for ongoing consideration by DepEd to realise enduring benefits for the most disadvantaged IP and Muslim learners after the initiative closes and for support by DFAT through BEST may be guided by the following:

The evidence gathered through this ICR indicates that the level of sustainability of community efforts will be directly proportional to their degree of engagement with the school / learning environment of their children. For example Schools of Living Tradition are likely to be

sustained due to maximal involvement of the communities. In contrast, where the relationships between the community/school and organisation have just commenced, it is perceived by this ICR, that these programs are less likely to endure without continued support and technical assistance. However, across the board, this ICR found that the indigenised learning materials produced as a result of PRIME's support are likely to continue to be used in affected schools because of government policies on MTB-MLE and K-12, but with improvements in the quality of these materials requiring on-going support.

Although most Divisions supported by PRIME have indicated the desire to maintain relations with CSOs/NGOs working with IP/Muslim communities, further support will be required to embed agreements and strengthen relationships and shared values.

The Monitoring and Evaluation and Plan Adjustment technology (MEPA) is a major sustainable outcome of PRIME with the potential to strengthen policy and planning and financial management more broadly within DepEd and to build capacity for evidence based policy implementation and planning at all levels. The M&E system of PRIME demonstrates exemplary practice in embedding effective M&E in partner government systems.

During the conduct of this ICR the DepEd indicated the intention to adopt and rollout nationally the Project Management Information System (PMIS) and the MEPA technology but has indicated that this will require continued TA. This is incorporated into the recommendations, below.

### **Gender equality**

PRIME developed a comprehensive Gender, Poverty, Inclusion and Disability Strategy at the outset and has continued to monitor and update the strategy. However, in terms of conscious application there is relatively little evidence of improved understanding of gender equity and inclusive education amongst key stakeholders interviewed by the Review Team. In general, the ICR found that the analysis and interpretation of sex disaggregated data and information in order to inform policy and planning was limited

DepEd is only just beginning to understand the issues associated with IP and Muslim education in general. Finer distinctions within this context, related to gender, disability, language culture, environment and geography are yet to be fully realised.

Finally, while the ICR found that access to education continues to be a problem with reasons for leaving school varying between males and females and ethnic groups, there is emerging evidence PRIME raised awareness within DepEd (at all levels) and in DFAT regarding the combination of key factors that enable access (culturally and linguistically relevant curriculum materials, increased awareness and recognition and acceptance of ethnicity by self and others) and inhibit access (exclusive curriculum, discrimination, abject poverty, geography, conflict and livelihood) to quality education, with emergent understanding of the types of strategies that are effective to increase participation in schooling (representation and expression of culture, ADM, community based income generating programs, teacher training and immersion activities).

### **Recommendations**

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

1. DFAT continues to support DepEd at the end of the PRIME program to facilitate the systematic handover of the program and systems to IPSEO, OME and OPS and to assist with the transitioning of the priority PRIME program outcomes to BEST. Areas of focus include:
  - a) specifying the required further support and timelines for curriculum indigenisation and quality assurance
  - b) finalisation of the mapping and documentation for both IP and Muslim communities including location, population, livelihood and language
  - c) adoption and implementation of the Project Management Information System (PMIS) and the Monitoring and Evaluation and Plan Adjustment (MEPA) system for national rollout.

- d) research into effective alternative modes of delivery for IP/Muslim communities, considering, among others, access issues related to gender and children with disability, at the elementary and secondary level
  - e) determining approaches for effective engagement of NGOs/CSOs including refinements to the PRIME grant management approach
  - f) transition of most promising practices for support under BEST, in particular, indigenisation of the curriculum and the development and quality assurance of localised, contextualised and indigenised teaching and learning resources.
2. DFAT, through BEST, continues to provide grants and TA for the benefit of IP/Muslim communities and schools in order to generate return on the PRIME investment and to avoid breaches of 'Do No Harm' principles AND THAT this on-going support focuses on:
    - a) the most marginalised (e.g. the Agta); and,
    - b) the areas where there is emerging evidence of commitment and achievement.
  3. THAT BEST adopts and revises the PRIME grant guidelines for provision of grants within the DepEd system to support implementation of DepEd policy:
    - a) through partnerships with reputable NGO/CSOs,
    - b) through optional mechanisms for funds disbursement and acquittal, aligned with actual project implementation schedules and, or integrated with the disbursements of the school budget (MOOE).
  4. THAT DFAT, through BEST supports DepEd to develop as part of the Learning Resource Management and Development system, clear guidelines and quality assurance processes for the local development of indigenised learning materials, including via support for in-service training and support to teachers to carry out QA of these materials.

Consequent upon discussions with DFAT following the presentation of the PRIME ICR Aide Memoire findings, the Review Team also made the following recommendations related to the inception and implementation planning of the BEST program of assistance. **Refer to Annex 9 for more detailed mapping of ICR findings and recommendations in relation to the BEST Program Design Document and Theory of Change.**

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

5. DFAT engages in policy dialogue on the need for increased convergence in the work of Government of the Philippines agencies and donors on IP and Muslim education.
6. DFAT reviews the BEST program design and Theory of Change to ensure that on-going TA support is provided under BEST to Regional and Division level staff in Regions with the highest populations of IP/Muslim learners.
7. DFAT recognise that the on-going re-structuring may affect the absorptive capacity of staff to participate in sustaining the IP/Muslim education interventions and thus will need to coordinate with DepEd executives to ensure appropriate levels of counterpart resources are available.
8. AND THAT DFAT acknowledges the request of DepEd for assistance to operationalise the Rationalisation Plan and to ensure that the BEST inception and implementation planning supports DepEd to develop the capacity to operationalise the newly mandated functions of the IPsEO and OME under the Office of Curriculum and Instruction and within the Bureau of Learning Delivery.

DepEd also requested that ICR provide explicit recommendations to the DepEd arising from the ICR with respect to ongoing implementation of IP and Muslim education policies and in consideration of the commenced rationalisation. These recommendations are documented in Annex 10 Matrix of Recommendations.

## Evaluation Criteria Ratings

Evaluation Criteria <sup>1</sup>	Rating (1-6)	Explanation
Relevance	6	<p>The program goal and objectives remain relevant to the needs of IP and Muslim communities and to the strategic and policy directions of GoA and GoP. The Theory of change is valid but requires recasting on the supply side to take account of lack of institutional capacity in DepEd. The aid modalities remain relevant but a range of lessons have been identified regarding effectiveness and efficiency which need to be integrated into the guidelines for operation of any grant facility under BEST.</p> <p>TA remains highly relevant but the focus will need to consider implementation of the Rationalisation Plan and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro. DepEd is seeking ongoing support through BEST to implement the Rationalisation Plan. There is substantial, on-going need for TA at the Regional/Division level to implement the IPED framework and the revised Roadmap for Muslim Education.</p>
Effectiveness	5	<p>There is evidence that PRIME has been effective in achieving the End-of-Program Objectives. Evidence of achievement of demand-side objectives includes significant community cash and in-kind contributions to PRIME projects, as well as anecdotal evidence of increased engagement by IP/Muslim communities in the education of their children. There is also anecdotal evidence of increased enrolments as a result of PRIME interventions but this is not validated by current DepEd data.</p> <p>Evidence of achievement of supply-side objectives includes substantial progress in implementation of the IP Education Framework by the PRIME funded and TA supported IPsEO in developing culturally responsive teaching-learning materials, facilitating inter-tribe dialogues. The introduction of the MEPA technology also offers great potential to improve mechanisms for monitoring program delivery and for addressing performance bottlenecks at Division and Region levels and for providing feedback to central office to improve policy formulation. However, the Review Team observed only three regions, which were proficient in use of the technology. The decision of central office to rollout the technology nationally is a credit to PRIME but will require substantial support to be embedded in Regions/Divisions.</p> <p>There is evidence of achievement of the enabling objective, namely, perception change of IPs/Muslim program beneficiaries and of non-IP, non-Muslim DepEd officials. Whilst conscious learning has taken place – within communities and DepEd – the dissemination of lessons learned is not guaranteed without further support. The paradigm shift to a demand responsive approach to the delivery of basic education services is emergent at best.</p>
Efficiency	4	<p>The shortened timeframe for PRIME – 39 months as opposed to the original proposition of five years – was impractical given the need to generate demand amongst the most marginalised and underserved communities and the need to shift attitudes in the largest government department in the Philippines. As a result, the sunk costs invested so far will not generate anticipated efficiencies without on-going, strategically targeted support.</p> <p>A significantly higher proportion of grant monies were provided in targeted Regions/Divisions for IP education than for Muslim education;</p>

<sup>1</sup> If impact is included, a rating is not expected to be applied.

		<p>the reasons are outlined in the main report.</p> <p>The grant mechanism demonstrated usefulness for stimulating school / community engagement in IP/Muslim education with PRIME funds supporting better access to culturally responsive learning opportunities for 107, 414 IP and Muslim learners through the conduct of over 600 school based and 110 community based projects and with most of the projects addressing absenteeism, drop-outs and poor academic performance. However, channelling of grants through Divisions required to meet Commission on Audit accountability requirements substantially delayed utilisation of grants. Lack of clarity within some Divisions on the purpose of the grants and approval mechanisms caused further delays. Failure to recognise the limited capacity of some school heads and communities to prepare proposals and the challenges they face in acquitting funds were also weaknesses in implementation.</p> <p>Activities funded were largely consistent with overall program objectives; the majority of both school and community grants were focused on strengthening the teaching and learning process.</p> <p>Technical assistance and expertise was generally of good quality and served as a stopgap measure to the low absorptive capacity of DepEd counterpart resources. But DepEd, through BEST, needs to source and build adequate mechanisms for support to central office (OME and IPsEO) regions/divisions/schools and communities. Support for communities, via CSOs/NGOs, should be continued but needs to respond to their needs and be provided by reputable agencies.</p>
Sustainability	4	<p>PRIME aimed to achieve enduring benefits in terms of sustained IP/Muslim community demand for improved education, improved capacity within DepEd to respond to this demand and a shift in departmental perspective towards the need for a demand responsive approach to education for IP/Muslim learners. The sustainability of community benefits is directly proportional to the degree of engagement of IP/Muslim communities with the school / learning environment of their children. This varies substantially across the targeted Regions/Division.</p> <p>The positive shift in attitudes of individual DepEd personnel exposed to PRIME may be sustained but the degree of influence on colleagues may be limited. Institutionalization of improved approaches to IP / Muslim education within DepEd will require a concerted and systematic capacity building approach.</p> <p>Indigenised learning materials produced as a result of PRIME's support are likely to continue to be used in affected schools because of government policies on MTB-MLE and K-12. However, improvements in the quality of these materials will require on-going support.</p> <p>The ICR found evidence that the MEPA technology will be sustained in Regions II, XII and IV-B as a result of the work of PRIME and DepEd central office has realised the potential of the system and committed to institutionalise this technology and the PMIS across all regions. This reflects well upon the usefulness of PRIME's work in this area but substantial TA will be required to embed the technology in the other regions.</p> <p>The risks to sustainability have been well monitored with sustainability reviews conducted mid-program term but some issues relating to responsibility, accountability and ownership of program implementation has reduced the capacity of stakeholders, project managers and beneficiaries to effectively plan together for sustained gains post PRIME.</p>
Gender equality	3	<p>PRIME has developed a Gender, Poverty, Inclusion and Disability Awareness Strategy. Although the ICR found some evidence of gender awareness, there was little evidence of purposive integration of gender</p>

	<p>in practice at the level of the region/division/school/community. That is, ICR respondents were generally unclear on how to identify and respond to issues related to gender in efforts to localise and contextualize IP and Muslim education.</p> <p>Baseline research data generated under PRIME provided some coverage of gender, which was mainly in the form of statements of 'boys and girls' in the disaggregation of some data by sex, and the mention of one or two access issues faced by girls or boys, such as, early marriage and leaving school to work. Similarly, some M&amp;E and planning data had been differentiated by sex, but the analysis was generally inadequate to guide policy and programming to address issues related to gender. This is a situation that can be attributed to beliefs that gender and development concerns can be dealt with after, rather than during, the process of increasing access to, and the quality of, education.</p> <p>In addition, the ICR found significant evidence of a cultural dimension to gender equality, in terms of the representation of traditional and contemporary, socio-cultural and economic practices that needs to be considered when IP/Muslim culture is being expressed within an educational curriculum context.</p> <p>With the exception of a few CSO/NGO partners of PRIME, the growing understanding of the issues associated with IP and Muslim education has not extended to a layered appreciation of inclusiveness as ethnicity (IP/Muslim) intersects with gender, as well as, disability and location or geography. Increased and continuous dialogue with partners in relation to gender equality and implications for educational access, quality and achievement is required. Specifically, increased emphasis on developing understanding and analytical capacities, such that donor and counterpart gender equality related strategies do more than collect sex disaggregated data and realistically link gender mainstreaming and inclusive education efforts.</p>
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<b>Satisfactory</b>		<b>Less than satisfactory</b>	
<b>6</b>	Very high quality	<b>3</b>	Less than adequate quality
<b>5</b>	Good quality	<b>2</b>	Poor quality
<b>4</b>	Adequate quality	<b>1</b>	Very poor quality

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Initiative background

The Philippines Response to Indigenous Peoples' and Muslim Education (PRIME) Program was designed to improve equitable access to- and quality of- basic education for girls and boys in disadvantaged Muslim and Indigenous Peoples' (IPs) communities – citing that many of these communities continue to be underserved with respect to the provision of basic education services. The PRIME Program builds on and scales up support activities previously developed under the Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM) project that concluded in 2009.

#### **Objectives:**

a) Enable the Department of Education (DepEd) to provide better access to an appropriate, policy driven, sustainable and quality education for girls and boys in Muslim and IPs communities.

It is expected that the various interventions under the Program will lead to an increased participation, enrolment, completion, transition rates and student learning outcomes for an estimated 1.1 million Muslim and 700,000 IP children across the country. The program is delivered through government system with the Department of Education taking the lead in program implementation with the managing contractor's technical support. The program was designed to offer flexible responses to the unique linguistic, cultural and religious identities and backgrounds of both IP and Muslim communities. It is also intended to support DepEd on identifying, designing and implementing a range of education programs and services that are responsive and sensitive to the demands of both target groups.

b) Stimulate demand for education services from IP and Muslim communities. PRIME aims to build the capacity of DepEd to provide better access to a quality and culturally relevant and policy driven basic education to Muslim and IP communities.

The program's support includes mobilising and strengthening community and schools to attract and retain children either in schools or other community learning environments. Engaging Civil Society Organisations (CSO) / Non-Government Organisations (NGO) to deliver education projects in remote disadvantaged communities will contribute to strengthening the program's advocacy and to mobilising community elders and leaders to articulate education services that they believed responsive for their children's growth and development. The flexible approach to delivering intervention support to target communities is a good entry point on winning the support of community elders/leaders participate in implementing education projects and take a lead role on communicating the need to send and keep children stay in school.

The PRIME Program was designed to cover seven Regions as reflected in the original design. However, DepEd requested the Australian Government to include two additional Regions – which had been part of the outcome from the Investment Coordination Committee approval process. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (formerly AusAID) agreed to the request of DepEd and PRIME now works in Regions I, II, CAR, III, IV-B, IX, X, XI, XII and XIII.

### 1.2 Review Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this Independent Completion Review (ICR) is to provide senior management of the Australian aid program and DepEd with information to determine how best to sustain and institutionalise support for IP and Muslim communities via a combination of direct support to IP/Muslim communities, networks/organisations and institutional strengthening of

DepEd (central, regional and division offices)<sup>2</sup>. Specifically, the results of this review will be used to ensure that the benefits achieved by PRIME will be sustained via a transition strategy and integration into inception planning for Australia's upcoming investment Basic Education Sector Transformation (BEST) program. The results of the review will also inform on-going implementation of DepEd's Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA), the Philippines Development Plan 2011-2016 (PDP) and Education for All (EFA). The review will also inform implementation of the DepEd Rationalisation Plan and the K to 12 curriculum implementation.

The ICR was organised around the six OECD DAC criteria, namely, Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, Sustainability, and Gender Equality. Each criterion (with the exception of Impact) was rated on a scale of 1-6.<sup>3</sup> It is deemed too early to assess impact. The DFAT Quality at Implementation Ratings Matrix, (registered #297) was used for both the interpretation of the review criteria and as the basis for the ratings. Annex 2 provides a detailed outline of the questions, which were addressed under each criterion.

### 1.3 Review Scope and Methods

The review team aimed to ensure that this ICR is useful to the key stakeholders. The ICR involved the following phases:

- **Phase 1: Desk Review** to examine key program documents. The Review Team conducted individual analysis of relevant documents. The Review Team focused this desk review upon a preliminary consideration of the key review questions and with a view to articulating issues to be discussed with key stakeholders. The desk review also formed the basis for factual data presented in the ICR report.
- **Phase 2: Preparation of Review Plan** involving submission of draft Review Plan to key DFAT – Australian Aid and DepEd stakeholders and preparation of a final Review Plan, incorporating issues identified by senior management. The final Review Plan was circulated to all relevant DFAT - Australian Aid and DepEd staff in the field prior to the field visits. Annex 2 contains key questions, which were used as an on-going guide and framework for Review Team members in their questions and in the organisation of their notes. These questions also provided the format for organisation of Phase 3: Analysis, Feedback and Reporting.
- **Phase 3: Field visits** involving:
  - *In-depth analysis of PRIME documentation and data base in the PRIME office:*
  - *In-depth review of a sample of activities:* Given time, resource and security constraints it was not possible for the Review Team to examine a fully representative sample of activities supported by PRIME. Field visits were conducted to Regions I, II, IV-B, X, XII and CAR. The final field visit schedule is attached as Annex 4.
  - *Key informant interviews (KII)* conducted with purposively selected, informed individuals at each of the field visit sites enabled probing and triangulation of stakeholder issues and perspectives concerning the achievements of PRIME. The full list of persons met is attached as Annex 5. Each interview was

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<sup>2</sup> Note: The DepEd from the outset requested for the ICR findings and recommendations to be clearly articulated in terms of direction to DepEd in the ongoing implementation of the Rationalisation plan, the implementation of the Kto12 policy and in relation to utilization of the forthcoming Australian government funded Basic Education Sector Transformation (BEST) program.

<sup>3</sup> Performance against quality criteria is rated using a six point scale as follows: 6: Very high quality; needs ongoing management and monitoring only; 5: Good quality; needs minor work to improve in some areas; 4: Adequate quality; needs some work to improve; 3: Less than adequate quality; needs work to improve in core areas; 2: Poor quality; needs major work to improve; 1: Very poor quality; needs major overhaul.

conducted in a semi-structured, informal manner, with greater or lesser degrees of emphasis being given to different questions according to the person being interviewed. No single stakeholder was asked all questions. In each interview the review team members took individual notes, which were consolidated at the end of each day.

- *Focus group discussions* (FGD) were employed to: (i) invite stakeholders from areas that were not able to be visited to travel to meet with the Review Team; (ii) facilitate discussion with similar classes of stakeholder (e.g. teachers, parents) and to (ii) address cross-cutting issues (e.g. achievements in terms of gender equality). Details of persons included in FGD are also included in Annex 5.
- FGDs enabled the review team to rapidly develop a sense of the diversity of views about the program. This method was especially useful for identifying key sources of diversity of results.
- *Observation*: general observations during the fieldwork confirmed or challenged preliminary conclusions arising from the other methods; for example the interactions/relationships between classes of stakeholder, the degree of professionalism of implementation, the quality and appropriateness of deliverables, and the general attitude/engagement of various stakeholders.
- **Phase 4: Analysis, Feedback and Reporting.** Review team members compiled their own notes of interviews and discussions. Regular team discussions throughout the fieldwork phase were undertaken to assimilate the emerging trends against the key review questions.

Content analysis methods were employed to identify common and exceptional themes against the key issues in the Terms of Reference (ToR) and the review questions. The review team formed conclusions in relation to the review questions that synthesised the views of the various stakeholders but ultimately involved the professional judgements of the team members. The review team adopted a 'consensus approach' to conclusions.

Reporting of review findings involved three key steps:

- **Review Mission Aide Memoire:** at the completion of the fieldwork phase the review team resent the preliminary findings to key review stakeholders on 21<sup>st</sup> April for the purposes of validation and refinement.
- **Draft report:** following the fieldwork phase, the review team applied content analysis methods to synthesise findings from the field. A draft report was prepared and submitted by 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2014.
- **Final report:** a Final Report will be produced upon review of the Draft Final Report.

## 1.4 Limitations

The very nature of the PRIME program in targeting the most remote and marginalised communities has resulted in the conduct of many PRIME funded projects in locations that are difficult to reach by timely and cost efficient means. In addition the peace and order situation in some parts of Mindanao prevented the team from travelling directly to these communities. As noted above, where the sampling methodology identified sites in difficult to reach locations efforts were made to bring the stakeholders together in one location for a Focus Group Discussion rather than the ICR team travelling to individual sites over many days. (Regions, I, X, XII). The ICR team was also aware that without site visits fewer women and girls would be able to participate and has been careful to involve and document participation in the ICR in terms of gender. In some instances, another similar site was selected from within the Division (Palawan and Isabela) or at least within the region (Region II, Division of Nueva Vizcaya) and involving the same ethnic groups. The Evaluation Plan (Annex 3)

describes in detail the Sampling Methodology and site selection, with the final Itinerary and the List of Respondents contained in Annex 4 and 5, respectively.

## 2. Evaluation Findings

### 2.1 Relevance

Rating: 6

#### PRIME Achievements and issues

**2.1.1 The development need – to improve the access of IP and Muslim children to quality basic education – remains great.** It is difficult to obtain accurate figures on Indigenous Peoples and the Muslim population in the Philippines. It is clear, however, that these people are highly marginalised compared to the rest of the population. Historically, they have experienced neglect and discrimination in the provision of basic social services. Education indicators reveal the lowest participation rates, completion rates and student learning outcomes.

**2.1.2 The commitment of both the Government of the Philippines (GoP) and the Government of Australia (GoA) to achieving equitable access to quality basic education for IP and Muslim children remains high.**

**2.1.3 The Government of the Philippines enshrined the commitment to IP education** in the Republic Act 8371, Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA), DepEd Order 62 Series of 2011 National Indigenous Peoples' Education Policy Framework, (DO62 s 2011) Republic Act 10533, K-12 Enhanced Basic Education System (RA10533). The current GoP budget incorporates a budget line item for IP Education of Php100m for 110 divisions with high IP populations across all regions<sup>4</sup>. For the 2014-15 budget there is a further proposal for a P10m fund, which would provide a subsidy to IP students in private learning institutions operating in areas not reached by DepEd. Coupled with the recently released guidelines on recognition of private learning institutions for IP communities there is increased potential for marginalised IP learners to have access to basic education.<sup>5</sup>

For Muslim Education, DO 40 series of 2011 enshrines the legitimate right and aspiration of Muslim communities to Islamic education and the Roadmap for Muslim Education (currently under revision) outlines the way in which this commitment will be operationalised<sup>6</sup>. Php300m is committed per annum to Muslim education.

Two major factors affect on-going relevance. First the DepEd Rationalisation Plan<sup>7</sup> provides for integration of both the Indigenous Peoples' Education Office (IPsEO) and the Office of Madrasah Education (OME) under the new structure for Curriculum and Instruction and as part of the Bureau of Learning Delivery. The implications of this restructure are not fully understood at this stage.

Second, the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro incorporates provision for the Bangsamoro government to have exclusive rights over education within the locations under their governance. This will have implications for the degree to which DepEd systems will apply but, again, the implications are not fully understood at this stage.

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<sup>4</sup> DepEd Order, 22 s2014, Implementing Guidelines on the Allocation and Utilization of the IPed Program Support Fund (PSF) for Fiscal Year 2014. (Regions of ARMM and National Capital Regions have separate budgets supporting Muslim and IP learners.)

<sup>5</sup> DepEd Order 21 s 2014, Guidelines on the Recognition of Private Learning Institutions Serving IP Learners

<sup>6</sup> DepEd Order 40 s 2011 Amendment to DepEd Order 50 s 2004, Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris, required the implementation of the Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum (REMC) as a consequence of an expansive review of the textbooks, ALIVE materials and curriculum.

<sup>7</sup> Approval November 15, 2013

**2.1.4 The Government of Australia demonstrated its commitment** to on-going support for the education sector in the Philippines via the Australia Philippines Development Cooperation Program Statement of Commitment 2012-2017.<sup>8</sup> This statement commits Australia to providing support to bring about increased access, participation and completion rates for elementary and secondary education. The Philippines Education Delivery Strategy 2013-2023<sup>9</sup> elaborates and extends the timeframe for this commitment by committing Australia to support strengthening of the policy and organisational environment at the central level; support the testing and establishment of good practice norms and processes in targeted regions for national scale-up and work to reduce disparity in educational outcomes, particularly in ARMM and other conflict affected areas.

Australia has honoured its commitment to strengthening basic education in the Philippines via a series of programs including the Strengthening Implementation of Visayas Education (STRIVE) (2005-2010); Basic Education Sector Reform – Support for Philippines Basic Education Reforms (BESR-SPHERE (2007-2014); Philippines Response to Muslim and Indigenous Peoples Education (PRIME); Philippines Social Protection Initiative (2009-2015); and Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao in ARMM (BEAM-ARMM) Program (2011-2015).

GoA's on-going commitment to the education sector is enshrined in the Basic Education Sector Transformation (BEST) program, due to commence in July, 2014. This program aims to contribute to improved quality of education outcomes; more equitable access of all people at all levels of education; and improved service delivery through better governance. BEST will integrate the targeted support provided under PRIME and BEAM-ARMM.

**2.1.5 The Theory of Change (ToC) on the demand side remains broadly correct.** However, both the progress and process of change is influenced by a number of key variables. **The ToC on the supply side needs to be refined to take account of the competing priorities and capacity constraints of DepEd at Region/Division levels.**

Although the design document did not specifically outline a Theory of Change, this evolved during implementation and was enshrined in the PRIME monitoring and evaluation framework. The reconstructed ToC is outlined in Table 1 below. The Review Team carried out field visits to a sample of PRIME Regions, Divisions and project sites and observations were recorded against the ToC; this record is attached as Annex 6.

As a result of these observations, together with the review of relevant documentation, the Review Team found that the applicability of the Theory of Change on the demand side is influenced by, whether:

- the school population is majority IP/Muslim, a mixed group or a minority group
- the school head and/or teachers are from the same ethno- linguistic or cultural/religious group (or are highly integrated into the community)
- the IP/Muslim community is already mobilised / organised and, therefore, able to take advantage of TA / grants
- the IP/Muslim community has committed support, in the form of a CSO/NGO, capable of 'buffering' the link between the community and DepEd.

On the supply side, the Review Team found that a number of assumptions embedded in the Theory of change were not validated. These included the assumption that:

- DepEd CO has sufficient staff to enable absorption of PRIME Technical Assistance (TA) inputs and existing workload permits implementation of proposed capacity building at Region level
- Regions have operationalised Republic Act 9155 Governance of Basic Education.

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<sup>8</sup> Signed in Canberra 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2012 Canberra by DDG NEDA and DDG AusAID

<sup>9</sup> Philippines Program Education Delivery Strategy 2013-2023: Australian Embassy, Manila 17 February, 2014

- existing workload and capacity at Regional level permits ‘cascading’ of improved approaches to Division level
- Divisions understand the purpose of PRIME grants and understand that they have the opportunity to test mechanisms for improved IP/Muslim education; and that,
- this understanding is passed on to school heads.

As a result of these observations, the Review Team is of the view that the ToC on the supply side needs to be reconsidered in respect of the:

- reliance upon Regional staff to ‘cascade’ the knowledge and skills down to the Division and school levels without substantial TA support
- reliance upon School Divisions to manage community grants.

On a positive note, the Review Team observations suggest, that the continued/strengthened emphasis upon monitoring of the progress of implementation of IP/Muslim education (and other) programs at the Division level for feedback to the Regional –Monitoring Evaluation and Plan Adjustment (MEPA) and on to the Central Office has the potential to substantially improve supply side performance.

However, it is necessary to have a realistic appreciation of the minimum time required to achieve capacity building of individuals, organisational development and diffusion of innovation in dealing with IP/Muslim communities.

**Table 1a: Theory of Change – PRIME**

<b>Theory Of Change</b>	<b>Assumptions</b>
<b>DEMAND SIDE</b>	
Advocacy / social preparation within IP / Muslim communities	PRIME capacity building at Regional level would adequately ‘cascade’ to Division level.
▼	DepEd Division offices has the data, skills and capacity to identify and engage with IP/Muslim communities or with CSOs/NGOs
Willingness of IP Muslim communities to participate / willingness to contribute.	
Communities preparing proposals for grant assistance	
	Communities have capacity to prepare proposals or access to TA to assist in preparation
Review and acceptance of eligible proposals ▼	Divisions have the capacity to evaluate and appraise proposals
	Speedy and transparent processing of proposals
Disbursement of funds ▼	DepEd system could accommodate community grants
Implementation of community projects	
▼	
IP/Muslim education will become contextualised and relevant.	Community projects will influence teaching and learning for IP/Muslim students and/or student access.
▼	
Demand for quality basic education will increase and be sustained.	One round of grant support is able to generate sustained change.
▼	
Sustainable relationships developed between CSOs/NGOs serving IP/Muslim communities and Division Offices ▼	<b>Note: The PRIME strategy was not directly focused on developing sustainable relationships between schools and communities.</b>

**Table 1b: Theory of Change – PRIME**

<b>SUPPLY SIDE</b>	
Central Office advocates to change perceptions and provides TA to Regions to improve basic education services to IP/Muslim communities	DepEd central office has sufficient staff to enable absorption of PRIME TA inputs and existing workload permits implementation of proposed capacity building at Region level.
▼	
Regions ‘cascade’ improved approaches to engaging and planning with IP/Muslim communities to Divisions.	Regions have operationalised RA9155 Existing workload and capacity at Regional level permits ‘cascading’ of improved approaches to Division level.
▼	
Regions advocate to change perceptions and empower Divisions to engage CSOs / NGOs linked with IP/Muslim communities (see Demand Side) <b>and</b> To advocate to change perceptions and orient school heads	Divisions understand the purpose of PRIME grants and understand that they have the opportunity to test mechanisms for improved IP/Muslim education <b>AND</b>
▼	
Schools formulate proposals / obtain grants	This understanding is passed on to school heads.
▼	
Schools implement projects and develop competencies to improve access and quality of basic education services to IP/Muslim communities	
▼	
Experience of schools monitored by Divisions, lessons fed into Regional MEPA to influence programs and policy.	
▼	
There is a positive shift in attitudes within DepEd towards IP and Muslim identity, culture and education.	

**2.1.6 The aid modalities, grants and technical assistance** (including facilitation of DepEd/community linkages and the introduction of the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan Adjustment - MEPA) **remain relevant to achievement of the goals of the IP Education Framework, the Roadmap for Muslim Education and the directions of the DepEd Planning Service.**

**2.1.7 As a grants Facility** PRIME provided Division managed grants to schools and communities, as well as direct grants to DepEd Central Office (CO) and CO managed grants to Regional and Divisional offices. A range of lessons has been identified regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of these grants and these are outlined under sub-sections 2.2 and 2.3 below. These lessons need to be integrated into the guidelines for operation of any grant facility under BEST.

**2.1.8 As a technical assistance Facility** PRIME also provided a range of support including:

- four technical assistants (TA) to IPsEO with various deliverables
- one TA to OME to help build its database on Asatidz, Madaris, Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) Coordinators to develop an Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and System and to assist with the revision of the Roadmap for Muslim Education
- three TAs to Office of Planning Services focused on School Improvement Plan (SIP) formulation, one TA on MEPA and Planning Development and Evaluation concerns
- on call support to Regions and Divisions.

## Considerations for ongoing support for policy implementation.

**2.1.9 The counterpart focus for TA and capacity building support is only beginning to emerge as the implementation of the Rationalisation Plan is being commenced and the implications of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro<sup>10</sup> is being understood.** In this context, TA remains a highly relevant form of support, particularly to institutionalise IPEd through framework development, Ancestral Doman Education planning and curriculum integration. TA also remains critical to finalise database development and implementation of a revised Roadmap for Muslim Education.

It is also clear to the Review Team that the curriculum and learning materials developed for IP and Muslim learners cannot adopt a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Contextualization, including indigenisation and localisation, is critical in making the curriculum and learning materials relevant to a particular group of learners. For this to occur, TA must be provided at the Central, Regional/Divisional level to ensure ongoing support for implementation of the relevant IP/Muslim education policies.

While the PRIME program support fund for IP and Muslim education is to close, the policy implementation is only just commenced within the DepEd. In this context the immediate identification of the key positions responsible for IP/Muslim education policy within the new structure, development of the position descriptions and selection and placement of personnel should be a high priority of the DepEd. If agreed, this is also an area that DFAT should consider as a high priority to support transitioning of to the BEST program.

## 2.2 Effectiveness

Rating: 5

### PRIME Achievements and Issues

Whilst many of the challenges faced by IP and Muslim communities, and students, are broadly similar, effective responses need to address the specific needs / demands of individual communities. The PRIME design honoured this principle and, as a result, the program has facilitated a diverse range of activities, but with varying results. Additionally, the PRIME program was implemented using government structures and systems and with new NGO's and CSO's partners, at a time when the DepEd was also undergoing significant change and reform with the implementation of the K to 12 curriculum and commenced restructure as per the rationalisation plan. In reviewing this work, the Review Team has faced a challenge in attempting to *both* respect and record the diversity encountered during field visits *and* draw broad conclusions about effectiveness and lessons learned. The review team has attempted to resolve this dilemma by carrying out content analysis of observations made during field visits via the organising principle of the Theory of Change. This record is attached as Annex 6.

**2.2.1 The provision of grants to communities and schools appears to have been effective in engaging IP/Muslim communities and demonstrating demand for quality basic education for their children.** The field visits of the Review Team identified high levels of demand from within affected communities and schools for PRIME grants to improve IP/Muslim education. In many cases the PRIME grants also appear to have strengthened the relationship between the school and the community. However, some communities were wary of short-term gains and exploitation, while the level of abject poverty in others drove them to accept any assistance, albeit with little participation in the process of improving access to education.

Lower levels of grants were provided for Muslim education compared to IP education. Details are provided in the Efficiency sub-section 2.3.2 below. Lower grant levels reflected

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<sup>10</sup> The Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro was signed on March 27, 2014, concluding 17 years of negotiations between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

the (initial) lack of engagement between OME and PRIME and the fact that substantial budget was already committed by the Government of the Philippines to Muslim education<sup>11</sup>. OME became more actively involved in PRIME in the final year of implementation. PRIME also deferred provision of grants to target Regions/Divisions for Muslim education pending the outcomes of a key research project, the Muslim Education Initiatives Review (MEIR).

**2.2.2 Proposal preparation / approval:** In some Regions/Divisions proponents and beneficiaries were very involved in writing the grant proposal. In these instances the teachers, students and community members advised the Review Team that it was “painful but we learned a lot” and they would do it again because it forced them to reflect upon the real education issues. In many Divisions delays in the approval and release of grants to recipients was reportedly due to strict and rigid scrutiny and appraisal of the proposals submitted. At the other extreme, a range of factors appeared to short-circuit the involvement of the IP/Muslim communities in project identification and proposal preparation. In some cases projects were identified – and approved – at Divisional level without consideration of the impact on schools and communities.

**2.2.3 Community contribution:** The level of community contribution is a standard indicator of demand. PRIME data indicates that community grants totalled Php 47.3m while counterpart contributions amounted to Php 3.4m or 7% of the value of the PRIME grants. This is a substantial monetary contribution given the poverty levels of the target communities. Furthermore, this does not include in-kind contributions, which have been substantial (e.g. labour donated by communities to construct learning centres; time and local resources committed by elders to documenting tribal history and culture).

**2.2.4 Increased enrolments:** A second standard indicator of demand – increased enrolments – is not yet registering in DepEd data. This is not surprising, however, given the short life cycle of PRIME. Before and after comparisons for a randomly selected set of PRIME and non-PRIME recipient schools do not reveal a significant increase in enrolment. Only Region XII Divisions and the Division of Palawan, Region IV-B registered a significant increase in their enrolment. Despite the failure of DepEd data to register increases in enrolments, the Review Team encountered a number of examples where parents / school staff advised that enrolments had, in fact, increased and absenteeism had been substantially reduced. Increases in enrollment were also reported by schools in a number of the case studies prepared by PRIME. Examples include: (i) reported increase from 55 to 73 students in current school year, Bato Ili ES; (ii) reported increase in Grade 1 enrolments from 12 in 2011 to 20 students in 2014, a rate of increase seen in the other grade levels; Bago School, Ilocos Del Sur; Division (iii) Data in Lanao Del Norte show that all the supported Madaris showed marked increases in the number of pupils in the 2013 school year.

In some instances, as a direct result of the PRIME program increased enrollment was observed due to the implementation of the nutrition (feeding) program and provision of school supplies, e.g. for the Agtas in San Jose ES and in Lupigui ES in the Division of Isabella. It was reported that in SY2013-14, 32 Agta pupils enrolled in Grade 1 in Lupigui ES (where previously there had been no Agta enrollees). However, it is expected that if the feeding program is stopped, there will be a decrease in the number of Agta enrollees.

**2.2.5 The Review Team found anecdotal evidence of strengthened awareness and perception of ‘self worth’ amongst IP and Muslim communities as a result of improvements in the teaching and learning environment.** Most of the communities visited testified to an increased sense of self worth as a result of the support provided by PRIME to address the educational needs of their children. However, this did not apply in the most marginalised communities (e.g. the Agta) where the decisions about the focus of grants had been made by DepEd Division level.

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<sup>11</sup> Madrasah Education is supported by an annual budget of Php 300m.

The PRIME Most Significant Change (MSC) stories collected from IP children and parents also reveal an improved sense of self worth in the Divisions of Isabela, Ilocos Sur and Occidental Mindoro and Palawan. The MSC stories further suggest that IP communities experienced an improved appreciation of their culture and desire to preserve it in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) Divisions and Divisions of Isabela, Region II, Ilocos Sur, Region I and Occidental Mindoro, Region IV-B.

The Review Team also found examples of an increased sense of self worth amongst Muslim communities, particularly where PRIME had supported Madaris schools, which had otherwise not received any support from OME. The PRIME MSC stories confirm perception changes in children in Lanao Del Norte, Region X, where the establishment of ALIVE centres has resulted in pupils urging their subject teachers: *“Teacher, teacher, it’s time for ALIVE class, we want to go to Azatidz”*<sup>12</sup>.

**2.2.6 The Review Team found evidence of changed perceptions** towards IP/Muslim culture and identity in Division and school personnel exposed to PRIME training / immersions but the influence of these individuals upon colleagues is less clear. Individual examples of positive shifts in attitudes within the DepEd towards IP identity, culture and education were encountered in almost all sites visited by the Review Team. The Review Team also found a number of examples where both DepEd and IP leaders recognised that they needed to educate each other; IP leaders need to educate DepEd about IP education and DepEd to educate IP leaders about DepEd’s systems.

Evidence of changed perceptions is also presented in independent research carried out by the Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC) with PRIME funding.<sup>13</sup> The IPC reported that non-IP and Moro teachers found the trainings and seminars conducted by the PRIME program to be useful in helping them to understand the needs of indigenous and Muslim learners. The value of the cultural immersions funded by PRIME are also referred to in the MSC reports for the Division of Ilocos Sur (see Box 1) and in a Region-CAR Reflections Report following an immersion exercise carried out in Occidental Mindoro (see Box 2).

**Box 1: Extract from PRIME Most Significant Change Report Division of Ilocos Sur, Region I.**

*“The most significant experience of change in awareness and perception of my understanding about IP communities dawned on me during the immersion program in Banaue, Ifugao and Tugdaan, Najun, Occidental Mindoro. The internalization of the worth, length and breadth of IP education was deeply internalized. This was the turning point. I am 100% committed to support, strengthen and implement a coherent IP education in the Division of Ilocos Sur.”*

(An ASDS, Division of Ilocos Sur)

<sup>12</sup> PRIME CASE STUDY 4: Using Most Significant Change (MSC) Stories as Feedback Tool in IP and Muslim Education

<sup>13</sup> Baseline Profiles of Selected Communities Supported by the PRIME Program Final Report October 2013 Institute of Philippine Culture, School of Social Sciences, Ateneo de Manila University.

**Box 2: Extract from Region CAR ‘Community Immersion Reflection Report’**

*During the immersion, each participant was asked to journal their thoughts and insights on what they were experiencing and feeling. From the journal and the group discussion, several domains of change or themes were observed to capture the experience of the group. These domains of change are important milestones in their journey as IP educators. They include:*



Despite these positive findings, an independent (PRIME funded) study of DepEd’s Readiness to Provide and Sustain Basic Education Services to Disadvantaged IP and Muslim Communities found that in PRIME-recipient schools where the main actors were the principal and one or two support teachers, the rest of the ‘uninvolved’ teachers had very little awareness of the objectives and rationale of the IP Education Framework in general, or the PRIME initiative in particular.<sup>14</sup> This emphasizes the importance of on-going training/immersions for DepEd personnel on IP/Muslim Education.

The Review Team also found examples of Muslim education managers and teachers reporting a change in perception about expressing their culture during a workshop with Muslim educators in Iligan City. This confirmed the findings of the PRIME MSC reports for Lanao Del Norte Division, Region X, where ‘Change in Perception’ received the highest number of references in the MSC change stories (See Box 3).

**Box 3: Extract from PRIME Most Significant Change Report, Division of Lanao Del Norte, Region X**

*“I’m not originally from this place. I used to live in a community with 100% Muslim population. I took it for granted. I found it so ironic because here, there’s a place like this ALIVE Center. I asked myself: What did I do in my community before? Now I’ve realized how important it is to express my culture for people to see. I need to strive more so that they will understand that I am not different from the rest. In a mixed culture, I need to assert my identity.”*

(Muslim Education Manager)

<sup>14</sup> Baseline Study of DepEd’s Readiness to Provide and Sustain Basic Education Services to Disadvantaged IP and Muslim Communities; Center for Development Management, Asian Institute of Management, May 2013 p 27

**2.2.7 However, the generation of sustained community demand and an on-going partnership between communities and schools requires a longer-term effort.** Whilst the School Based Management (SBM) policy provided the basis for the development of stronger relationships between schools and communities, the Review Team found that the level of advocacy carried out by the school with parents on education policies, rights / responsibilities and shared understanding of education benefits varied greatly, as did the level of genuine partnership between the communities and the schools.

At one extreme, the IP groups that were already well organised, (e.g. the Daraghuyan and Talaandig tribes in Bukidnon, major IP groups in CAR and the B'laan) exerted strong influence on the school. At the other extreme, communities that are neither strong enough, nor organized enough, to reach out and navigate a dialogue with DepEd (such as the Agta) were observed to have an extremely passive role. In between these two extremes the Review Team encountered a range of examples where the PRIME program was able, in varying degrees, to increase parent and leader participation in school meetings, increase participation of parents and leaders as co-project implementers, encourage participation of parents and leaders as teachers of IKSPs, improve the capacity of parents to help their children with their studies and influence IP leader to form associations to assist with IP education.

The Review Team found that, where the IP/Muslim groups are not well organised, parents/elders/caregivers tend to hold the view that the DepEd personnel know more about developing the curriculum and learning materials than themselves because they lack education. However, in both indigenous and Muslim communities the role of traditional leaders is important in instilling values and traditions that promote indigenous and Muslim culture and identity. Unless this knowledge is clearly valued and sought after for inclusion in the curriculum, IP and Muslim groups are not likely to feel that they can contribute much to the school.

**2.2.8 PRIME was able to make its greatest contributions to sustainable generation of community demand where there were strong, pre-existing relationships between the school and the community elders or where PRIME grants were provided to co-located schools and communities.**<sup>15</sup> In the latter cases, the Review Team observed leaders with a growing understanding of their potential role in the school and schools learning how to work with the community to improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning environment. However, this is just emerging and needs to be nurtured.

**2.2.9 There is a need for greater convergence in the work of donors in support for IP and Muslim education.** PRIME appears to have had some influence in encouraging convergence of Non Government Organisations, Civil Society Organisations and Indigenous Peoples' Organisations to sustain IP education through IPsEO. However, at the Regional and Division level there still appears to be a plethora of different kinds of support. This is beyond the absorptive capacity of most Divisions, which leads to inadequate orientation of schools about the educational purpose of the grants. In Region X the RO had attempted to strengthen partnership with other organisations in government providing services to IP and Muslim communities but found this to be challenging.

There is a need for convergence of efforts between DepEd and National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos and other donors to support IP and Muslim education. This is an area where the Australian Embassy, Manila may fruitfully engage in policy dialogue at the national level.

**2.2.10. Contextualization of learning materials for IP/Muslim Education was one of the most funded activities under PRIME but the results, in terms of improved teaching and learning, are only just beginning to emerge.** DepEd's Mother Tongue-based Multilingual

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<sup>15</sup> PRIME did not require the recipients of school and community grants to be co-located. Divisions appear to have sought to widely distribute the school grants and few school and community grants were co-located

Education (MTB-MLE) policy embodies the recognition that students are able to learn best, in the early years, through the use of their mother tongue. However, only 19 mother tongue languages have been introduced to DepEd<sup>16</sup>. A key 'value add' of PRIME has been the provision of grant funds to schools/communities for the production of instructional materials in the (many) local languages which fall outside the 19 designated mother tongues.

However, the Review Team observed a broad spectrum of approaches to contextualising IP education, which ranged from the mere translation of existing texts into local languages, to the documentation of IP culture as a precursor to producing learning materials, to the actual integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSP) into the learning materials. Treatment of issues around gender varied among the IP groups, depending on the gender discourse in traditional cultural norms and social organizations. As with most educational materials reference to themes or persons with disabilities or other social or environmental issues were non-existent. In all, the Review Team was unable to verify the educational and linguistic quality of the instructional materials, without the benefit of translations and with reference to the intended IP Education curriculum framework and the K to 12 curriculum standards.

However, the Review Team is of the view that the on-going development and quality assurance of contextualized learning materials will greatly depend on the initiative of teachers. As a result, in-service training and support to teachers in effective pedagogies for IP/multi-lingual and multicultural education, as well as training to upgrade the quality of indigenized classroom materials should be a high priority. Such training should also cover portrayal of both traditional and real-life stories of IP and Muslim girls and boys, society and environment.

**2.2.11 By contrast to IP education, the PRIME investment in Muslim Education has been comparatively less** (see sub-section 2.3.2 below) and fewer learning materials have been contextualized for Muslim communities. Of the IP/Muslim schools visited for this ICR and supported by PRIME it was reported that the conduct of the ALIVE program as part of the Muslim Education Program is highly dependent on access to the ALIVE learning materials. However, the Review Team found these materials to be lacking in most schools visited and in some schools out-dated versions of the ALIVE materials were still being used. It was clear that the distribution by DepEd of the newly revised ALIVE materials had not yet reached all schools. This situation was validated by the OME. It was relayed to the Review Team that even the MEIR research study team had only recently been provided with the updated copies of the materials.<sup>17</sup>

**2.2.12 The Review Team found an expressed need for trained Muslim teachers in all sites visited.** In some instances parents/elders/caregivers did not perceive the ALIVE teachers to be effective because they were not adequately educated. While the teacher training needs for the ALIVE program was not intended to be addressed directly through PRIME, some training in the ALIVE program was conducted as a part of PRIME to support use of the ALIVE materials, where materials were available. However, the issue of teacher quality is a perennial issue for DepEd, and one that was continuously raised during this ICR.

The main issue cited relates to a lack of graduates that pass the Qualifying Examination in Arabic Language and Islamic Studies (QEALIS). For example it was reported by the OME that there are 1001 schools with ALIVE classes, but only around 300 teachers that have passed the Licensure exam<sup>18</sup>. DepEd as part of the K to 12 Madrasah Education Program

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<sup>16</sup> The MTB-MLE policy initially commenced in 2010 with 12 languages, this was expanded to 19 languages in 2013, however, this is still only a small percentage of the 170 + languages and dialects of the Philippines archipelago of more than 7000 islands.

<sup>17</sup> ICR Team meeting with OME, DepEd 28 March 2014. Indicated that the study had initially reviewed the older versions of the materials

<sup>18</sup> DepEd memorandum, No 214 s 2013, states that of a total of 1775 test takers only 459 or 25.86% passed with a cut of score of 75%.

and aiming to improve the level of teacher quality for the delivery of the ALIVE program in public elementary and secondary schools implemented a Program Support Fund for QEALIS qualifiers to be hired under contract and to undergo further training comprised of the Accelerated Teacher Education Program (ATEP) and Language and Enhanced Pedagogy (LEaP) training<sup>19</sup>. However, there is seemingly a need for more to be done. In Pulot Shore ES, visited for this ICR, the teachers reported that only seven (7) out of twenty-three (23) scholars passed the ATEP with the explanation being that it is difficult for the graduates to participate in the program due to lack of time for self study and adequate funds to cover the cost of participation in exam reviews.

There is an urgent need for the DepEd to address this need as part of the Muslim Education policy implementation and in consideration of the Bangsomoro Agreement, if the K to 12 Madrasah Education Program is to be implemented effectively and achieve the intended improvements in educational outcomes for IP and Muslim learners. It is also an area that DFAT should consider in the context of ongoing support in BEAM and through BEST.

**2.2.13 There is some evidence of materials developed in PRIME supported schools being used more broadly.** During field visits, the Review Team observed that in Bato III Elementary School, Occidental Mindoro the Kindergarten curriculum will be shared with four other schools catering to the same Buhid tribe. Materials produced for the Pulot Shore and Bayog Elementary Schools, in Palawan will be used in two other satellite schools. Similarly, the materials produced in the Daraghuyan Ancestral Domain Tribal School of Living Traditions and in the Lamlifew School of Living Traditions, are being reproduced for broader use by Daraghuyan-Bukidnon and B'laan communities respectively.

Case studies prepared by the Asian Institute of Management, with PRIME funding, also reported that PRIME funding was used:

- in the Division of Ifugao, Region – CAR to reproduce and distribute locally developed Grade 1 modules and instructional materials; it should be noted, however, that the Division of Ifugao has had many years of experience integrating indigenous culture in formal schooling
- in Palina ES, Division of La Union, to integrate IKSP (acquired via consultations with IP elders by teachers in indigenous communities) into Information and Communication Technology to enable students to access the discovered information: *“the school expects to offer a rich source of developed and updated instructional materials that are sensitive to indigenous contexts.”*<sup>20</sup>

**Considerations for ongoing support for policy implementation.**

**2.2.14 While there are good examples of institutionalisation of improved approaches to IP/Muslim education within DepEd this is highly variable.**

In CAR an IP Education Roadmap is in preparation, as well as development of an aligned Regional Educational Development Plan and Cultural Standards, which will help with quality assurance of learning materials. An IPEd framework is under development in all CAR Divisions (including non Prime Divisions). Platforms of Cooperation with IP Councils have been signed in Apayao, Kalinga, Mt Province and Ifugao Divisions.

In Region I, an IPEd framework has been developed in La Union Division and District supervisors are being encouraged to extend to their non-PRIME schools the lessons learned and best practices of the PRIME grantees so that IP Ed can be sustained within the Division. The development of IP curriculum and learning materials for Grades 1 and 2 in all minority schools in Region I is on-going.

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<sup>19</sup> DepEd Order, No. 46. s 2013, Guidelines on the Madrasah Education Program and Utilization of the Support Fund

<sup>20</sup> Centre for Development Management, Asian Institute of Management Division of La Union Case Study, PRIME Project

In-service training for teachers of IP students is being carried out in the Division of Occidental Mindoro, Region IVB by an established civil society organisation, Pamana Ka. A Regional Manual of Operations for Muslim education has been developed in Region X.

**2.2.15 The ICR found variable and emerging capacities and competencies of teachers, school heads, community members and other DepED staff to correctly apply the learning and/or utilize the outputs provided for by the Program in their work environment.**

Despite these positive examples, it was clear in a number of Divisions visited that there was limited understanding that the PRIME grants and TA were intended to provide an opportunity to test improved mechanisms for IP and Muslim education. There were examples of Divisions simply texting schools that grants were available, without providing further details; in this sense, the PRIME grants were simply treated as an extension of SBM grants.

Significantly, all project proposals submitted to PRIME by the Division of Isabela, Region II concentrated on feeding programs since Division officials believe that feeding programs and school materials are essential to increase the participation of the Agta students. However, the Review Team observed that officials and teachers exhibited a lack of knowledge and appreciation of the history, culture, practices and beliefs of the Agta. A situation that was also raised in the Asian Institute Management (AIM) independent case study for PRIME as follows:

*“The belief of having the capacity to innovate or modify the content of the school curriculum by the teachers in order to achieve learning goals was not realized. However, the teachers demonstrated determination and dedication in teaching a traditional course content such that in an account shared by a teacher, the Agta student requires double the time and attention given to the Ilokano students.”<sup>21</sup>*

**2.2.16 The greatest degree of conscious learning and institutionalisation of improved approaches appears to have occurred where:**

- The majority of pupils are IPs and in schools in areas with strong IP identity.
- The Region and Division Office is highly committed, with involvement of personnel from planning, curriculum and finance.
- IP/Muslim Education Coordinators at Region and Division levels are committed and aware; for example, some DepEd staff had extensive exposure / immersions with IP communities prior to the commencement of PRIME (e.g. IP Coordinator in Div. of Bukidnon, Region X and IP Coordinator in Palawan, Region IV-B)
- A large proportion of the teachers come from the same IP learner group.
- An active CSO is able to facilitate on-going documentation of IP culture and practices for use by DepEd (e.g. KIN in Region 10)
- The Region / Divisions are skilled and competent in the application of the MEPA technology (e.g. Region XII, IV-B, CAR)

**2.2.17 There is evidence of interest in continuing partnerships between Divisions and CSOs/NGOs serving IP / Muslim communities.** The Independent Sustainability Review of PRIME, conducted in September 2012, noted that DepEd DOs were ill-equipped to directly engage communities and that PRIME should focus, instead upon strengthening the links and partnerships between DepEd and the existing, organic networks and CSOs/NGOs serving IP and Muslim communities. The results of recent R-MEPAs reveal that partnerships with CSOs will continue in the Division of Occidental Mindoro, Region IV-B; Divisions of Davao del Norte and Davao del Sur, Region XI. All other Divisions participating in PRIME expressed the willingness to continue partnerships with CSOs.

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<sup>21</sup> Centre for Development Management, Asian Institute of Management Isabela Case Study, PRIME Project: Regina S. Abesamis February 2013 pg 13

Despite this apparently positive outcome, PRIME funded TA in IPSeO report that some Divisions have formed contractual relationships with CSOs to work with IP communities without first attempting to determine what the communities want and whether, in fact, they choose to work with the contracted CSOs.

**2.2.18 The Monitoring and Evaluation Plan Adjustment (MEPA) technology introduced by PRIME has the potential to improve conscious learning within DepEd and, therefore, evidence based decision-making and policy development.** The MEPA is a mechanism for policy feedback and enhancement. It is designed to enable DepEd to respond to the demands and/or unique learning needs of all types of learners. Through the MEPA, the DepEd reviews the responsiveness and effectiveness of existing policies, education programs and organization systems to improving access, efficiency and quality of basic education services.

Operationally, the MEPA provides the platform for DepEd's Central Office (CO), Regional Office (RO), and Division Office (DO) to promptly address bottlenecks or issues in the basic education services policies, limitations in program design, inefficiencies in support systems, and/or lack of demand-responsive approaches. This will enable DepEd to be more demand responsive rather than supply (program) driven. The feedback generated through the MEPA will facilitate the development of more inclusive policies and programs, and more efficient support systems.<sup>22</sup>

The PRIME program introduced the MEPA process in all Regions and PRIME Divisions<sup>23</sup>. The approach has been well received; some comments from DepEd staff to the Review Team are presented in Box 4, below. The Review Team observed that the most proficient practitioners were in Regions II, X and XII.

In Region XII the regional office reported that they found the MEPA process useful and effective in assessing the performance of programs and projects. Due to the perceived usefulness, the RO also expanded the use of MEPA to other (non-Prime) Divisions and to other programs and projects. Regional staff provided examples of the ways in which they had been able to use the MEPA as a platform to address bottlenecks. For example, the RO was able to secure an exemption from the moratorium issued by the central office concerning establishment of integrated schools by presenting quality data on overcrowding in IP classrooms, which was collected during the MEPA process. In another case, a non-PRIME division was able to identify the fact that poor staff performance was the cause of a serious underspend in respect to one the DepEd funded project budgets. The resulting action of the Division office - the appointment of another coordinator – averted the danger of Php1m being returned to central office.

In Region X the RO staff disaggregated data, through the MEPA process and, as a result, identified seasonal dropouts. Thereafter the RO offered an Open High School Program to these students. In Region II the RO staff reported having a two-track M&E system but expressed a preference for the MEPA approach because it is “more explicit on issues and in terms of performance responsibilities / accountabilities”.

Although the ROs and DOs routinely collect data for reporting purposes, the ‘value-add’ of PRIME in introducing the MEPA process was the focus on analysis of the data and dialogue in order to make decisions to address bottlenecks and lack of performance. Features such as the Most Significant Change Reports, Reporting of Financial and Physical Performance, Segmentation and the use of the Dashboard were all mentioned by staff interviewed and are all directly attributable to the work of PRIME.

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<sup>22</sup> Regional – Monitoring and Evaluation and Plan Adjustment (R-MEPA) 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2013 Briefing Note

<sup>23</sup> Except region III as it only received initial funding in 2014.

#### **Box 4: Comments from DepEd staff to the Review Team on the MEPA technology**

*“We used to present data in a tabular form. But the MEPA Dashboard is more useful since we can see the performance of the Division at a glance. We can see what we have done and what we need to do to address gaps.” (DepEd Staff, Ilocos Sur Division, Region 1)*

*“MEPA is the best thing that happened in DepEd” Region level DepEd staff, Region IVB)*

*“For the first time I had the experience of being **asked** by the group to explain what I had done in my program. (DepEd staff, General Santos City Division, Region 12)*

*“Our MEPA technology allows us to look at barriers and look into the way in which the Division’s problems may be addressed – at the Division level, Regional level or Central level. We see the MEPA technology as valuable in all programs and projects. We don’t just focus on IP and Muslim Education but also ALS, Science and Technology, SPED, multigrade, etc.” (Division level DepEd staff, Sultan Kudarat Division, Region 12)*

*“This is a concise, easy to understand medium. It is a very convenient tool” (Region level DepEd staff, Region 12)*

*“Before, performance indicators were submitted as part of the requirements for teachers’ clearance; now with the MEPA process, we are forced to see what the data is trying to say about our performance.” (Region IVB, Division of Palawan PRIME schools teachers and School Heads, FGD)*

**2.2.19 Following the field visits, the Review Team was advised by OPS-PDED that the MEPA technology has now been adopted by CO as the preferred technology for monitoring and review of program performance and is being rolled out to all Regions. This is a significant achievement of PRIME.**

The Review Team observations indicate that a range of factors will influence the degree to which the MEPA technology may be effectively institutionalised in DepEd and recommends ongoing TA and support through BEST. These include:

- execution of appropriate exit briefings / sharing of experience between PRIME personnel and PDED
- stability in personnel (post Rationalisation Plan) at the Regional level; it is particularly important for the planner and M&E positions to work consistently and collaboratively on the institutionalisation of the MEPA technology
- development of basic skills, at Region and Division levels, in data collection, analysis and use.
- sufficient time to implement, learn, practice and review the use of the MEPA technology at Division and Regional levels.
- adequate technical assistance during the early cycles of application of the MEPA.

**2.2.20 The willingness / capacity of central office to utilize support from PRIME – and the resultant benefit - has varied. Lessons learned:**

**Program implementation:** Ultimately, the PRIME program would have been implemented by a combination of offices, involving curriculum, research and planning and at all levels within DepEd. However, the commencement of PRIME coincided with two major reforms within the Basic Education Curriculum. The introduction of the Kto12 curriculum and the Mother-tongue based Multilingual Education policy (MTB-MLE). While this timing provided a significant opportunity for capacity development and TA to be leveraged from the PRIME program for the implementation of these new policy initiatives targeting access and improved curriculum relevance and quality for IP and Muslim learners, the actual absorptive capacity of

central office management and the Bureaus of Curriculum to do so was extremely limited. As such, the DepEd office responsible for planning, research, monitoring and evaluation (OPS) has implemented the IPEd and MEd, under PRIME. The strength of this approach is the capacity developed in project, financial and grants management and for evidence based planning, monitoring and evaluation within this office. The weakness is in the lack of involvement and a policy disconnect by those responsible for designing and implementing the Kto12 curriculum, teaching and learning and the MTB-MLE curriculum.

The OPS, as with most offices in DepEd<sup>24</sup> were understaffed during PRIME implementation (with only one officer carrying the bulk of the responsibility), which limited the capacity to absorb TA. Despite this limitation, considerable guidance has been provided to Regions and Divisions on the development of the MEPA technology. This has now resulted in the roll-out of this technology to all Regions in conjunction with the Strategic Planning approach introduced by OPS.

Understaffing of OPS during the early years of the program also created downstream difficulties, where staff newly returned to OPS after completion of scholarship degrees in Australia, were not satisfied with the methodologies employed in studies, which had been approved in their absence.

### **Considerations for ongoing support for policy implementation**

**IP Education policy implementation:** However, IPsEO was set up with funding support from PRIME and, following recommendations of the ISR, provided with four TAs to assist in implementation of the IPEd Framework. Due to the clarity of direction provided by the IPEd Framework, IPsEO was also able to capitalize on the grant funds available to channel more than Php13m to IP communities. On-going support for CO staff fulfilling IP education functions will be dependent upon implementation of the DepEd Rationalisation Plan.

**Muslim Education policy implementation:** In contrast, the Office of Muslim Education did not avail of PRIME support until towards the end of the funding period, which has limited support in this area. Moreover, the Review Team encountered examples where Divisions had sought assistance from PRIME for Muslim Education activities but a decision was made to defer support until the results of the Muslim Education Initiatives Review (MEIR) were available.

On-going support for CO staff fulfilling Muslim education functions will be dependent upon implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro and the DepEd Rationalisation Plan. However, there is a clear and present need for capacity building of OME staff at central level. There was also expressed sentiment among Muslim stakeholders for central office to appoint a respected Muslim educator to push the agenda for Muslim education.

## **2.3 Efficiency**

**Rating: 4**

### **PRIME Achievements and issues**

**2.3.1 The shortened time frame for PRIME imposed constraints, which reduced efficiency and effectiveness.** PRIME was simultaneously aiming to stimulate processes of community awareness/engagement, organisational awareness / capacity building in DepEd and the diffusion of innovation. The findings of international research in each of these areas highlight the need for sufficient time to be allocated to raise awareness, mobilise / organise stakeholders, develop stakeholder ownership of proposed innovations and, above all, to develop shared values.

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<sup>24</sup> While awaiting the development and approval of the Rationalization plan for the implementation of the new DepEd structure, a moratorium was put on the hire of staff for permanent positions.

After the 39 months of PRIME implementation important developments are occurring in community demand for basic education, DepEd capacity to supply quality services and shared approaches between stakeholders. However, these achievements are *emergent* rather than confirmed. The sunk costs invested so far will not generate anticipated efficiencies without on-going, strategically targeted support. In this context, the ICR proposes that DFAT continue support to DepEd at the end of the PRIME program to facilitate the systematic handover of the PRIME program and systems to IPSEO, OME and OPS and to support the transitioning priority PRIME program outcomes to BEST.

**2.3.2 A higher proportion of grant monies were provided for IP education than for Muslim education in targeted Regions/Divisions.** This reflected the (initial) lack of engagement between OME and PRIME and the fact that GoP already commits a substantial budget to Muslim education<sup>25</sup>. OME became more actively involved in PRIME in the final year of implementation. It was reported to the Review Team that the decision was made by PRIME to defer provision of grants to target Regions/Divisions for Muslim education pending the outcomes of a key research project, the Muslim Education Initiatives Review (MEIR). In hindsight this was perhaps an unfortunate decision as funds may have been able to be used in the aforementioned areas of need, such as, training of teachers and the reproduction and distribution of materials for the Muslim Education Program.

**Central Office grants:** At the central level approximately Php 32m (23%) of CO-managed grant funds were provided for projects on Muslim Education; Php 49m (35%) of funds were provided for projects on IP Education and Php 58m (42%) of funds were provided for projects related to joint IP / Muslim Education projects. The full list of DepEd Central Office-managed Grants is attached as Annex 7.

**School grants:** Overall, the PRIME program provided grants for 609 projects to 627 schools in 24 Divisions, worth approximately Php 114m. Seventy percent (70%) of these school projects (429 projects) were for IP learners, 19% (117 projects) were for Muslim learners, 4% (27 projects) were for mixed IP and Muslim learners and the remainder (36 projects) did not specify the target group. Total grants to schools for IP education amounted to over Php 81.2m; grants for Muslim education amounted to approximately Php 18.9m<sup>26</sup>. The distribution of grants, by Division, is presented in Annex 8.

Fifty percent of the schools projects (305 projects) focused on improving the teaching and learning process, while 25% (152 projects) focused on education planning (152 schools). These school grants served 19 IP ethnic groups in Luzon, 21 IP ethnic groups in Mindanao and seven Muslim groups.

**Community grants:** The PRIME program partnered with 109 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and funded 111 community projects worth Php 47.3m. Sixty eight percent (68%) of the community projects (75 projects) were for IPs; 23% of the projects were for Muslim communities (25 projects). Six projects were for mixed IP/Muslim communities and five projects did not specify the target group. Total grants to IP communities amounted to approximately Php 37.8m; grants to Muslim communities amounted to approximately Php 5.6 m. The distribution of grants, by Division, is presented in Annex 8.

Approximately 44% of the community projects (48 projects) were focused on improving the teaching and learning process and 19% (21 projects) were focused on improving the learning environment. Less than 1% of projects (6 projects) were focused on education planning involving communities, whilst the remaining 35 projects were included in a general category incorporating advocacy, feeding programs and school supplies. The grants served 15 IP ethnic groups in Luzon, 16 IP ethnic groups in Mindanao and seven Muslim ethnic groups.

**2.3.3 Community contributions have been significant, increasing the 'value for money' of community grants.** PRIME data indicates that community grants totalled Php

<sup>25</sup> Madrasah Education is supported by an annual budget of Php 300m.

<sup>26</sup> Data provided by PRIME Program Office and accurate as at 28/04/2014

47.3m while counterpart contributions amounted to Php 3.4m or 7% of the total cost of projects. This represents a substantial cash contribution from very poor communities and does not include in-kind contributions, which have been greater.

**2.3.4 Grants to schools have also leveraged substantial contributions from the LGU, Alumni and communities.** PRIME data indicates that school grants totalled Php 110,293,420. Additional funds leveraged from alumni and communities were Php 9,511,377 or 7% of the total cost of projects. However, this does not include in-kind contributions, which have been substantial.

As noted previously (2.2.1) the allocation and distribution of grants demonstrates significant reach by the PRIME program to engage the key stakeholders and intended beneficiaries in both IP and Muslim communities. It is also evidence of the commenced development of capacity within the DepEd to coordinate with relevant non-DepEd partners to supply the required educational services to the targeted IP and Muslim communities.

**Considerations for ongoing support for policy implementation.**

**2.3.5 However, a range of inefficiencies were detected in the way in which the grants mechanism was administered using DepEd structures and systems, including:**

- Conflicting workloads and commitments prevented the grant proposal evaluators meeting in a timely fashion
- In some Regions and Divisions downloading the PRIME grants through the DepEd system resulted in the funds being treated similarly to the regular School Based Management (SBM) grants which was not necessarily appropriate for the nature and intent of the PRIME grants to increase and sustain demand for education by IP/Muslim communities.
- Initial unrealistic expectations at Division level of community capacity to prepare proposals and meet accountability requirements.
- Lack of transparency (in certain Divisions) regarding the criteria for selection / approval of school/community grants.
- Lack of capacity of RO/DO/School personnel in planning and project management.
- Delays in disbursement of school IP/Muslim Ed grants.
- Delays in release of follow-on tranches to research organisations due to the lack of DepEd personnel to review the research progress milestone reports and documents to trigger the next tranche of funding.

In addition, some issues arose with respect to the lack of penalty clauses in the PRIME contracts for Central office grants reducing the efficiency of the contract management.

In combination, these inefficiencies led to delays in utilisation of grants and impacted on the achievement of the PRIME program and should be considered in any future planning by DFAT involving the use of grants to support DepEd policy implementation and utilising DepEd systems.

**2.3.6 The Review Team encountered a number of examples where grants were provided by some Divisions to communities for income generation activities which did not appear to directly address the constraints to children's' participation in school.** While these income-generating activities may well be worthwhile in their own right, it is not appropriate for them to be funded through an education support program.

**2.3.7 There are specific areas where on-going support is required to generate return on the PRIME investment and to avoid breaches of 'Do No Harm' principles.** These are:

- Priority support for extremely marginalised communities (such as the Agta); extreme care is required to ensure that these communities are assisted to articulate their own needs, rather than having those needs articulated for them by DepEd Divisions.
- Repeat grants for:

- IP focused CSOs that are operating schools preparing to be recognised by DepEd (e.g. Hagura schools in Occidental Mindoro and some Schools of Living Tradition)
- Madrasahs that are starting to implement the Basic Education Curriculum in preparation for recognition
- co-located community / school grants where collaborative approaches are emerging
- Development and quality assurance of learning materials produced as a result of PRIME grants, including uploading of learning materials to LRMS (especially in CAR) and in-service training of teachers in the development and use of IP/Muslim learning materials.
- On-going TA support for implementation of DEDPs, REDPs which have institutionalised improved approaches to IP/Muslim education as a result of PRIME support; this is particularly relevant to on-going funding and TA to CAR to institutionalize the IPEd Roadmap, Platforms of Cooperation and Cultural Standards and their integration in the Regional Education Development Plan (REDP) and all Division Education Development Plans (DEDP).

## 2.4 Sustainability

**Rating: 4**

### **PRIME Achievements and issues**

The PRIME program was designed to assist DepEd to identify, design and implement a range of basic education programs and services that respond to the unique requirements and “demands” of children belonging to disadvantaged IP and Muslim communities with the goal of improving the quality of, and equity in, basic learning outcomes for these learners.

The discussion of Effectiveness, in sub-section 2.2 above, has presented evidence and analysis, which has implications for the sustainability of the benefits achieved as a result of the PRIME program.

### **Considerations for ongoing support for policy implementation.**

The following provides areas for consideration for ongoing support by DFAT through BEST and by DepEd to realise enduring benefits for the most disadvantaged IP and Muslim learners after the initiative closes. More details are provided in Annexes 9 and 10.

**2.4.1 Sustainability of community efforts will be directly proportional to their degree of engagement with the school / learning environment of their children.** Support provided to Schools of Living traditions (SLT) will be sustained, as will the products arising out of support for schools/communities with strong relationships prior to PRIME. However, where PRIME support has been the primary driver for community / school engagement, further support will be required by DepEd to strengthen emergent relationships.

**2.4.2 The positive shift in attitudes of individual DepEd personnel to IP/Muslim identity and culture may be sustained but the degree of influence on colleagues will be limited.** This emphasizes the importance of on-going training / immersions for DepEd personnel on IP / Muslim education.

**2.4.3 Indigenised learning materials produced as a result of PRIME’s support are likely to continue to be used in affected schools because of government policies on MTB-MLE and K-12.** However, the expanded use of these materials may only occur where there is a strong relationship between the community and CSOs/NGOs able to disseminate the materials (e.g. Pamana Ka in the Division of Occidental Mindoro, Region IV-B; Bukidnon tribes and KIN in the Division of Bukidnon, Region X)

**2.4.4 Improvements in the quality of these materials will require on-going support** via Regional and community quality assurance and capacity development through in-service training of teachers.

**2.4.5 Institutionalization of improved approaches to IP / Muslim education within DepEd will require a concerted and systematic capacity building approach** to assist Regions/Divisions with high IP populations to study the achievements in Region-CAR, Region I, La Union Division and Region IVB, Division of Occidental Mindoro. The achievements of Region X in Muslim education may also provide important insights to other Regions/Divisions

**2.4.6 Although most Divisions supported by PRIME have indicated the desire to maintain relations with CSOs/NGOs working with IP/Muslim communities, further support will be required to embed agreements and strengthen relationships and shared values.** Further training / immersions are necessary to raise the awareness of Region / Division personnel regarding the requirement (and processes) for consulting with communities to determine their needs prior to contracting COSs/NGOs to work with those communities.

**2.4.7 The MEPA technology will be sustained in Regions 2, 12 and IV-B as a result of the work of PRIME<sup>27</sup>.** DepEd's commitment to institutionalise the technology across all regions reflects well upon the usefulness of PRIME's work in this area. However, substantial TA will be required to embed the technology in the other regions.

## 2.5 Gender Equality

Rating: 3

### PRIME Achievements and issues

The Review team acknowledges the significant efforts and inputs of the PRIME program to raise awareness and to commence processes to address the myriad of equality issues (gender, poverty, discrimination, disability, conflict) for the most disadvantaged and marginalised female and male IP and Muslim learners. It appreciates the emphasis from the beginning to establish gender, poverty, inclusivity and disability lenses to raise awareness. To this end, this report in general highlights and discusses these issues. However, this section is focussed on the PRIME program achievements in relation to the implementation of this strategy with specific reference to raising awareness of gender equality issues and with due consideration to the empowerment of girls and boys, men and women for their unfettered and active participation in education.

**2.5.1 The PRIME program developed a Gender, Poverty, Inclusion and Disability Awareness (GPIDA) Strategy with the following principles to guide implementation:** (1) a two tracked approach involving 'mainstreaming' and 'affirmative action' of inclusion to remove barriers to equal and fair participation by all children; (2) representation and participation to ensure voice and involvement in decision-making processes - "nothing about us without us"; (3) strong evidence and knowledge base derived from research and monitoring and evaluation, through "strengthening capacity for improved data collection, research and analysis on particular issues of inclusion" to inform policy and program decision-making; and (4) reflective practice and learning through the presentation of findings and discussions on specific aspects of inclusion during MEPA meetings<sup>28</sup>.

**2.5.2 The implementation of the GPIDA Strategy could be improved.** PRIME engaged Gender and Disability Advisers, and conducted three main capacity building interventions: i)

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<sup>27</sup> DepEd during this ICR announced the intention to implement the MEPA technology nationally and to also develop further the Project Management Information System for national rollout as part of the Unified Information System. Technical assistance and capacity development through the forthcoming BEST program was also requested.

<sup>28</sup> "PRIME Program Gender, Poverty Inclusion and Disability Awareness Strategy," 15 October 2011.

mainstreaming GPIDA in program activities, ii) inclusive-specific interventions (for gender and disability), and iii) capacity development support for gender mainstreaming work of DepEd. As reported here, the ICR found little evidence of purposive implementation of the Strategy beyond these initial inputs and some mention within the research and similar reports.

The findings of the baseline studies prompted PRIME to revise the GPIDA strategy. Specifically, the strategy was to be used at the i) field level, where schools and divisions would track accomplishments by ethnicity and gender (sex-disaggregation of data); ii) in the research studies funded by PRIME; and iii) in the application of research findings in the development of guidelines for the IP curriculum (IPsEO), in the revision of the Muslim Education Roadmap (OME), and in the localization of the IP guidelines to reflect the local community context, including the barriers to education caused by social and cultural factors.<sup>29</sup>

However, it seems in terms of the more substantive research that the coverage of issues related specifically to gender, is varied. The ‘Demand-side’ research reports<sup>30</sup> provided more substantial discussions of gender issues than did ‘Supply-side’ studies. More systematically, the ICR found that disaggregation of data by gender did not occur consistently in school and Division reports, or in the dashboards that were used in monitoring, evaluation and plan adjustment exercises.

A review of the Most Significant Change (MSC) stories<sup>31</sup>, included sex-disaggregated data in terms of contributors of the stories in Regions I, La Union and Ilocos Sur Divisions, Region II, Nueva Vizcaya Division and the Region CAR only. The few stories that distinguished between female and male learners focused on their IP/Muslim identity as reaffirmed by the support Muslim children got from PRIME by way of scarf/veil/ headdress (hijab, turong or kumbong) for the girls and cap (kuffiyah) for the boys; learning to dance (girls and boys) and play musical instruments (boys); and opportunity to wear their tribal dress (tapis for girls, and g-string for boys) to school.<sup>32</sup> The provision of headdress to the Muslim female learners was particularly significant to one community: “*Our dream of seeing all Muslim female pupils to wear turong is realized.*”<sup>33</sup> While the relevance to education remains illusive, perhaps the meaning and purpose of the veil or hijab beyond ‘culturally-sensitive’ attire as supported by DepEd policy on the religious rights of students,<sup>34</sup> could have been explored further in terms of access and participation of female Muslim learners.

**2.5.3 Coverage of gender themes in instructional/learning materials and discussion of culture differed among IP groups.** Development of learning resources, particularly instructional materials and ‘big books’ and ‘small books,’ were implemented in 76 of the 214 schools with completed PRIME-supported projects. The GPIDA Strategy implementation section of PRIME progress reports noted that those produced with PRIME support showed,

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<sup>29</sup> PRIME 3<sup>rd</sup> Six-Monthly Progress Report, January 2013, pp. 22-23.

<sup>30</sup> Two research reports where this was evident are the IPC report, “Baseline Profiles of Selected Communities Supported by the PRIME Program. Final Report. Case Assessments of Indigenous and Muslim Communities Seeking Responsive and Culture-Sensitive Education” (Institute of Philippine Culture, School of Social Sciences, Ateneo de Manila University. October 2013), and the “PRIME Inclusive Education, Component 1: Muslim and Indigenous Children with Disabilities,” (Research and Development Foundation of the College of Education, Inc. March 2014).

<sup>31</sup> The Most significant change stories, as part of the MEPA process, are used to highlight the changes that IP and Muslim communities value and changes that have affected their lives in the course of the program implementation.

<sup>32</sup> The PRIME Case Study 4: *Using Most Significant Change [MSC] Stories as Feedback Tools in IP and Muslim Education*, has 17 mentions of female/male learners. Of this, 12 had to do with dress, and a few others, with learning tribal dances or musical instruments. In addition, there were 11 mentions of women’s groups, but most of the citations referred to a Muslim women’s group in Zamboanga Sibuguey that were engaged in seaweed production.

<sup>33</sup> Case Study 4, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> DepEd Order, No 32 s 2013, reiterates the rights of students in relation to religion and articulates the right of Muslim Filipino women and girls to choose to wear veils and *hijab*.

as in traditional mainstream textbooks, men doing productive work and women doing care-giving work<sup>35</sup>. Only a few of the materials that the ICR Team saw showed variations on the theme. Buhid (Mangyan) learning materials had illustrations that showed women, men, girls and boys in various activities marking the Buhid life cycle, but with most stories tending to centre on boy's adventures.

Among the Schools of Living Tradition visited by the ICR Team, a considerable quantity of materials had been created, and the treatment of gender varied among the IP groups, depending on the gender discourse in the stories, traditional cultural norms and social organizations. For instance, in the Daraghuyan-Bukidnon comic series, the creation story speaks of two supreme beings that created man and woman simultaneously. Among the Talaandig (also in Bukidnon Division), balance (timbang) is an important principle.

In other, IP communities, the ICR found that 'culture' was primarily interpreted from the point of view of male leaders (as is consistent with their perceived role in the community), with the consequence of the IP women's experience or interpretation of their culture muted, if not entirely absent.

**2.5.4 Women's participation and voice varied in the process of contextualizing IP education.** Where women's contribution to cultural, economic and social life is more overt, gender-related themes are discussed and women and men are involved as tribal teachers [e.g. in Bukidnon and in Lamifew (B'laan)].

In CAR, a major shift is in place with efforts to institutionalize IP tribes' participation in IP education and resulting in the establishment of regional and division-level Councils of Elders comprising men and women elders, but still with women only accounting for 37% of the membership of the Regional Council. In other areas visited (Occidental Mindoro Mangyan and Palawan Division IP/Muslim groups), male elders/leaders were consulted in the preparation of the learning materials/lesson plans, even in Bayog, where one of the writers was a Palauan young woman.

In other situations such as in Nueva Vizcaya, the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM), helped to mobilize and organize the local IP women for economic activities and at the same time introduced and supported the translation of materials on gender issues, such as reproductive health for adolescents and adult women into the local languages and dialects. These topics, along with responsible parenting, were also covered in the Darughayan comic series, albeit in the context of tribal stories and rituals.

However, in general the ICR found that there is a need for further discourse on the representation of women and men and the 'why', 'what' and 'how' of IP culture to incorporate in the IP Education framework and related materials. That is, 'why' (diversity of language, knowledge, systems and practices), 'what' IP culture (past, traditional, contemporary) to incorporate and 'how' to express/portray/represent these ways of knowing and doing or indigenous knowledge systems and practices (IKSP) within the learning content and the everyday praxis of teachers and their pedagogy. Perhaps most importantly, greater consideration of 'whose' culture is being represented and interpreted thereby requiring increased involvement of the community in the content creation, as well as, in the validation of the learning plans and materials. The ICR found considerable variation in the role, contribution and levels of participation of the communities visited, including the different Mangyan tribes (PAMANA-KA), Buhid tribe (Bato Ili), Palauan tribes (Bayog), or Muslim groups (Pulot Shore), and the various IP groups in CAR.

**2.5.5 Access to education continues to be a problem, with reasons for leaving school varying between female and male learners.** As previously noted there is emerging evidence<sup>36</sup>, that PRIME has improved access to education for boys and girls. In many of the schools visited, however, boys were leaving school to work and girls to early marriage or to

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<sup>35</sup> PRIME 5<sup>th</sup> Six-Monthly Progress Report, January 2014, p. 23

<sup>36</sup> Refer to section 2.2.1 and footnote 9

attend to their babies or younger siblings. In areas where the indigenous tribes (such as the Mangyans) or bands (Agtas) are migratory, or where their farms (kaingin) are located far from the settlement, boys and girls would travel to work in the kaingin with their families.

**2.5.6 Access to education by girls who married young seemed to differ among the schools divisions.** IP and Muslim elders/leaders/teachers (ulamas and asatidz) and parents generally claimed that the age at marriage for most girls has risen, but there were still a few who marry at age 13 or 14 years. In Occidental Mindoro, girls who get married early and have babies early can/and some go back to school unlike boys who are less likely to return to school. In Lanao del Norte, the chances of girls who married very young staying in school were reportedly slimmer. In this regard, the ICR Team supports the recommendation of the IPC-Ateneo research, “to regularly check the enrollment of girls, campaign with parents to send them to school along with the boys, give girls strong support to continue on to higher grades, and in the process avoid the likelihood of early child marriage.”<sup>37</sup>

## 2.6 Poverty, inclusion and disability

### Considerations for ongoing support and for policy implementation

The Prime Program’s goal is to improve access and quality of basic education for boys and girls in disadvantaged Indigenous Cultural and Muslim communities. The program is designed to address barriers to education caused by language, distance, lack of culturally responsive learning and teaching materials and the need for a more inclusive educational environment. The GPIDA strategy, in addition to gender, focussed also on poverty, inclusion and disability. In this context the ICR found:

**2.6.1 In Region 2, improving access to education by the most marginal and poorest IP group, the Agta, was a high priority,** and a large portion of the PRIME grant funds went to Agta schools or communities, mainly for nutrition and health (feeding) programs and provision of protective wet weather gear. One school visited claimed that it had for the first time, enrolled 32 Agta pupils in Grade I in 2013-14, with age ranges from 5-13 years old, a situation which raises further questions regarding access / use of age appropriate materials, effective differentiated instructional pedagogies and the need for focussed literacy and numeracy education programs. Other strategies being explored include, construction of dormitories, three in the Division of Isabela funded through PRIME, to attract Agta parents to send their children to school. However, there are likely to be challenges, including allaying the fears of parents for the safety of their children, ensuring a system of coordination of supervision by parents, and the conduciveness of the dormitory facility to the Agta lifestyle and livelihood.

**2.6.2 Access is more of a supply than a demand issue for the most marginalised and underserved.** The PRIME program has demonstrated that there is a significant demand for education but it has also clearly illustrated that the supply and delivery of education needs to be reconsidered in the context of the communities being served. Bringing learners to school is one option but alternative modes of delivery that bring school to learners need to be considered and provided as viable and equivalent options for access to education by remote and marginalised communities. For example, in CAR the PRIME funded action research component of the PRIME-LRMDS project aimed to explore the affordances of technology for improving access to education for highly mobile communities, in the Divisions of Apayao and Mountain Province, through the use and distribution of Tablets loaded with locally developed IP materials and other DepEd K to 12 materials downloaded from the Learning Resources portal. Unfortunately, due to the many competing demands at the level of the region, and inadequate communication to the DepEd Executive by OPS and IPsEO about the nature and intent of the project, it was, until recently, very much delayed in its implementation<sup>38</sup>. This

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<sup>37</sup> Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC), “Baseline Profiles of Selected Communities Supported by the PRIME Program.” October 2013. Page 23.

<sup>38</sup> Training in the use of Tablets and upload of Learning Resources was conducted 8-9 May 2014.

study is one area that should be considered for ongoing support through the transitioning from PRIME to BEST as the findings will necessarily have broader application as an option for improving access to quality education for a range of learners, as is intended in Component 1.7 of BEST. Application and use of alternative modes of delivery is also a priority and aligned with DepEd's Inclusive Education policy and the recently revised Philippines Development Plan.

**2.6.3 Integrating the community and the school.** Another way to increase access and participation is to make more explicit links between the school and the community. A number of PRIME grants supported livelihood projects, often with women's groups. Some had very direct education links, such as the support to the B'laan village museum (school grant to Lamlifew Elementary School in Sultan Kudarat Division), where children are taught by B'laan women tribal crafts as part of the curriculum and where their products are displayed and sold through the village museum.

In other livelihood projects the aim was clearly to keep children in school. An example is the Carolotan (Nueva Vizcaya) microfinance project that provided 51 women (with children enrolled in the school) 5000 pesos for their enterprise (farming, piggery, sari-sari store). These enterprises reportedly provided enough cash income for the school requirements of children. However, since it only caters to families with children already in school, there is probably limited effect on increasing access although participation of enrolled students was reportedly improved.

**2.6.4 Analysis of education statistics can be improved at all levels.** While, the ICR found a general pattern of more male school leavers than girls, some of the schools visited had more male than female learners at each level. Nonetheless, school and Division officials interviewed claimed that they were losing more boys than girls. In this regard the ICR advocates the need for more comprehensive data collection, analysis and interpretation. For example, at the schools division (and regional) level, there is a need to incorporate school dropout data that have been classified or disaggregated by sex, as well as by disability, in the dashboard that serves as a key basis for the MEPA.

**2.6.5 The effect of disability on children's access to education seems to depend on the nature of the disability.** Poverty and remoteness of settlements were found to militate to prevent access of IP/Muslim learners to education especially for learners with more persistent or chronic disabilities requiring more specialised educational facilities and services. (e.g. cognitive, hearing or sight impaired learners), as such facilities are usually located in the town centre. For students with temporary physical disabilities, such as a broken leg, the students continued to go to school as long as there was a school in the tribal settlement (Occidental Mindoro), but not when the school could only be reached by walking up and down a mountain (as in Bayog, Brooke's Point in Palawan)<sup>39</sup>. The baseline study on Muslim and IP children with disabilities presented similar findings<sup>40</sup>. Interestingly, an unanticipated, access-related impact of this PRIME funded research was noted in Nueva Vizcaya Division. A school principal claimed that as a result of the study on IP and Muslim children with disabilities, 34 children with disabilities enrolled in her school for SY2013-2014. This influx of students caught the school unprepared, as it had no available facility (toilet) or trained teachers to handle the students. It also highlights the need for data and information on persons with disabilities, within the catchment area of schools, including their location and access to facilities and services based on disability need and with due consideration for alternative modes of access and delivery of education.

**2.6.6 School wash and sanitation facilities are lacking in some of the schools visited.** While this is not an issue that PRIME intended to address directly, nor does it only effect IP

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39 Anecdotes suggested that among the IPs, more male than female learners have physical and other disabilities.

<sup>40</sup> Research and Development Foundation of the College of Education, Inc., "PRIME Inclusive Education, Component 1: Muslim and Indigenous Children with Disabilities," March 2014.

and Muslim learners, it is however, an issue that needs to be documented, as it was raised many times during this mission. The ICR found that the lack of toilets and water supply in some schools, both DepEd public elementary schools and community learning centers generally affect female learners more than the males. Female learners, interviewed for this ICR reported that they would often go home to use the toilet and to wash, particularly when they were menstruating, and would sometimes not return to school. Although there was no data available for the ICR Team, the lack of toilets could also increase the risk of girls contracting urinary tract infection. In Muslim areas, lack of water affects both boys and girls, as they need water for ablution before prayers.

### **3 Conclusions and Recommendations**

Whilst DepEd policy initiatives (such as MTB-MLE, K-12 and the indigenisation of curriculum) have increased the focus on IPEd, a significant outcome of the PRIME program was in funding the initial set up of the Indigenous Peoples Education Office and in the placement of four TAs in IPsEO to support the implementation of the IP Education Framework. In the target Regions/Divisions a significant outcome of the PRIME and a 'value add' to the DepEd MTB-MLE policy implementation has been in accelerating the process of indigenizing curricula and learning materials, in facilitating a much stronger focus on local ethno-linguistic groups and in building DO/CSO and school/community partnerships.

For Muslim Education PRIME funded a major study of Muslim Education Initiatives and has provided TA to assist OME to develop baseline data, to review the Roadmap for Muslim Education and to develop a monitoring framework and system. At the Region/Division level the PRIME 'value add' appears to have been in addressing bottlenecks in the DepEd system (e.g. by facilitating training for ALIVE teachers; improving ALIVE learning facilities, documenting IKSP of indigenous Muslim groups) and by providing grants to madaris schools that were not accredited and recognised by DepEd.

The introduction of the MEPA technology in target Regions/Divisions to monitor PRIME program implementation has not only enabled DepEd to respond to the demands and/or unique learning needs of IP/Muslim communities, but has also provided a tool which has broad application. The MEPA has been embraced in the target Regions, and in central office, as a mechanism for facilitating more demand-responsive, effective and efficient delivery of basic education services.

The PRIME program aimed to test mechanisms to encourage increased demand for educational services in disadvantaged IP/Muslim communities; to enable DepEd to respond appropriately and to promote positive changes in the attitudes and perceptions of internal and external stakeholders to IP and Muslim identity and culture. In each of these areas the work of the PRIME program has demonstrated that change is possible and has highlighted factors, which hinder or promote positive change.

This Independent Completion Review has identified promising practices and areas where important changes are beginning to emerge. The recommendations which follow urge on-going support in key areas in order to generate a return on the PRIME investment, to avoid breaches of 'Do No Harm' principles and to facilitate an effective transition to the Basic Education Sector Transformation initiative.

#### **Recommendations**

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

1. DFAT continues to support DepEd at the end of the PRIME program to facilitate the systematic handover of the program and systems to IPSEO, OME and OPS and to assist with the transitioning of the priority PRIME program outcomes to BEST. Areas of focus include:

- a) specifying the required further support and timelines for curriculum indigenisation and quality assurance
  - b) finalisation of the mapping and documentation for both IP and Muslim communities including location, population, livelihood and language
  - c) adoption and implementation of the Project Management Information System (PMIS) and the Monitoring and Evaluation and Plan Adjustment (MEPA) system for national rollout.
  - d) research into effective alternative modes of delivery for IP/Muslim communities, considering, among others, access issues related to gender and children with disability, at the elementary and secondary level
  - e) determining approaches for effective engagement of NGOs/CSOs including refinements to the PRIME grant management approach
  - f) transition of most promising practices for support under BEST, in particular, indigenisation of the curriculum and the development and quality assurance of localised, contextualised and indigenised teaching and learning resources.
2. DFAT, through BEST, continues to provide grants and TA for the benefit of IP/Muslim communities and schools in order to generate return on the PRIME investment and to avoid breaches of 'Do No Harm' principles AND THAT this on-going support focuses on:
    - g) the most marginalised (e.g. the Agta); and,
    - h) the areas where there is emerging evidence of commitment and achievement.
  3. THAT BEST adopts and revises the PRIME grant guidelines for provision of grants within the DepEd system to support implementation of DepEd policy:
    - i) through partnerships with reputable NGO/CSOs,
    - j) through optional mechanisms for funds disbursement and acquittal, aligned with actual project implementation schedules and, or integrated with the disbursements of the school budget (MOOE).
  4. THAT DFAT, through BEST supports DepEd to develop as part of the Learning Resource Management and Development system, clear guidelines and quality assurance processes for the local development of indigenised learning materials, including via support for in-service training and support to teachers to carryout QA of these materials.

Consequent upon discussions with DFAT following the presentation of the PRIME ICR Aide Memoire findings, the Review Team also made the following recommendations related to the inception and implementation planning of the BEST program of assistance. **Refer to Annex 9 for more detailed mapping of ICR findings and recommendations in relation to the BEST Program Design Document and Theory of Change.**

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

5. DFAT engages in policy dialogue on the need for increased convergence in the work of Government of the Philippines agencies and donors on IP and Muslim education.
6. DFAT reviews the BEST program design and Theory of Change to ensure that on-going TA support is provided under BEST to Regional and Division level staff in Regions with the highest populations of IP/Muslim learners.
7. DFAT recognise that the on-going re-structuring may affect the absorptive capacity of staff to participate in sustaining the IP/Muslim education interventions and thus will need to coordinate with DepEd executives to ensure appropriate levels of counterpart resources are available.

8. AND THAT DFAT acknowledges the request of DepEd for assistance to operationalise the Rationalisation Plan and to ensure that the BEST inception and implementation planning supports DepEd to develop the capacity to operationalise the newly mandated functions of the IPsEO and OME under the Office of Curriculum and Instruction and within the Bureau of Learning Delivery.

DepEd also requested that ICR provide explicit recommendations to the DepEd arising from the ICR with respect to ongoing implementation of IP and Muslim education policies and in consideration of the commenced rationalisation. These recommendations are documented in Annex 10 Matrix of Recommendations.

## **ANNEXURES**

- Annex 1: ICR Terms of Reference**
- Annex 2: ICR Evaluation Key Questions**
- Annex 3: ICR Evaluation Plan**
- Annex 4: Field Visit Schedule – PRIME ICR**
- Annex 5: List of Persons Met**
- Annex 6: Matrix of Observations against Theory of Change**
- Annex 7: List of DepEd Central Office Managed Grants**
- Annex 8: Distribution of School and Community Grants by IP/Muslim Education and Division**
- Annex 9: Recommendations for ongoing implementation of the IP and Muslim education policies through BEST.**
- Annex 10: Matrix of Recommendations for DFAT and DepEd**

## **Appendices**

1. PRIME ICR Aide Memoire.