Joint Post-Project Evaluation

"Reading Program"

Philippines - Dicember 2018

Member of ChildFund Alliance

ABBREVIATION

BLGU	Barangay Local Government Unit
DepEd	Department of Education
ECARP	Every Child A Reader Program
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGU	Local Government Unit
MOOE	Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses
MTB-MLE	Mother Tongue - Based Multilingual Education
Phi-IRI	Philippine Informal Reading Inventory
PSDS	Public Schools District Supervisor
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals 2030
SPED	Special Education
SPG	Supreme Pupil Government
TNA	Training Needs Assessment

Executive Summary extracted from document "Reading Program Post-Project Evaluation" prepared by Advocates for Development Management and Sustainibility, (ADMS) INC, Bicol Region (Philippines) in Dicember 2018.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Fundación Educación y Cooperación – Educo is a global development NGO with a head office in Barcelona, Spain. The organization has over 25 years of experience in the service and defense of children and their rights.

Educo started in the Philippines in 2005 where it initially implemented initiatives in education, health, food security, economic development, environment, and community participation. EDUCO operates in 192 schools in 231 communities within the provinces of Camarines Sur, Sorsogon and Albay, reaching about 70,000 children.

The project entitled "SUPPORT TO DEPED-READING AND MTB-MLE: Enhancing the reading competence of pupils in the 223 partner schools through improved implementation of reading and MTB-MLE and lobbying for institutional support", herein after referred to as the Reading Project, helped operationalize the Department of Education's (DepEd) Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP). This project aimed to improve the learning outcomes by improving the reading proficiency of elementary pupils in the partner public elementary schools in the provinces of Albay, Camarines Sur and Sorsogon in the Bicol region. The project focused on providing technical and material support to the implementation of the reading program and Mother Tongue Based Multi-Lingual Education (MTB-MLE).DepEd was a close collaborator of the Reading Project at the regional, division and district levels. DepEd, especially at the district office level, participated in the operational planning, training (either as simple participants or as future trainers) and monitoring and coaching.

The Reading Project was originally implemented in 223 schools, however, after Educo's assessment of its areas of operation in 2012, a reduction in the number of partner-municipalities was implemented. The reduction was equivalent to 31 schools. The project was completed in 2015. To assess the impact of the project and document sustained gains, if any, an ex post evaluation was conducted from September to November 2018.

METHODOLOGY & SCOPE

Of the 192 schools left, the evaluation team covered 36 treatment schools and nine (9) control schools (pegged at 25% of the number of treatment sites) or a total of 45 schools. Sample schools were selected according to their location (eco-zone, lowland, upland and coastal) and size (small, medium, central, and mega). Out of the nine control schools, four (4) were elementary schools and five (5) were high schools. Five high schools which were not covered by the project were visited to trace the academic performance of some of the children who were involved in the reading program while they were in the elementary level.

All in all, 1,169 respondents participated in the evaluation as shown on Table 1 below:

Table 1. Summary of Evaluation Participants

Particulars	Male	Female	Total
Phil IRI test participants	141	146	287
FGD with children	202	212	414
FGD/KII with parents and community members	78	215	293
Principals, School Heads and Teachers	7	86	93
PSDS	0	5	5
SBRP Workshop Participants	16	61	77
Total	444	725	1,169

The project was evaluated based on the following criteria: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability. These criteria are the standard evaluation criteria being followed by the OECD-DAC. Gender, the physical environment as well as local environment for collaboration and cooperation were also considered. The evaluation team also looked into lessons learned and good practices that could be applied in the potential scale-up activities.

The assessment employed mixed methodology using both quantitative and qualitative tools to help ascertain the attainment of project objectives, outputs, outcomes, and short-term impacts, if any. The evaluation teams conducted the following:

1.**Inception meeting**. An inception meeting was conducted at the start of the engagement to discuss the evaluation process and to address questions, issues and concerns regarding the coverage, timeline, participants, logistics and others.

2.**Participatory inception workshop**. A participatory inception workshop was conducted at the start of the evaluation process to determine the types of questions to ask during the FGDs and the KIIs, and to agree on the documents/evidences required. The Public Schools District Supervisors (PSDSs), school principals/school heads, teachers, parents, and barangay representatives participated in the inception workshop. The children had a separate inception workshop where they were asked to give inputs on what questions should be asked during the FGDs and KIIs with their fellow children.

3.**Participatory gender-sensitive and child-sensitive qualitative data gathering**. Data gathering techniques such as Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and direct observations were used. Case studies were done to elaborate on key lessons learned and to demonstrate the dynamics of promising practices.

4.**Feedbacking meetings**. Feedbacking meetings were conducted during the course of the evaluation to discuss issues and concerns.

5.**Documents/Desk Review**. The evaluation team reviewed the design, internal monitoring and evaluation reports, implementation progress reports, relevant minutes of meetings, process documentation and other pertinent documents of the project. The team also interviewed the staff through face-to-face

interaction, phone conversations, emails, and other acceptable methods of communication. The method was intended to get a clearer picture of the effectiveness and efficiency of the project.

6.**Field meetings and observations**. The team conducted field meetings and observations.

7.**Case studies and process documentation**. The team documented good practices and lessons learned by the children, teachers, LGU officials and the communities.

8.**Participatory data analysis**. A participatory data analysis was done to allow all stakeholders to review the data/information gathered and provide their inputs/justifications. This activity was done towards the end of the evaluation process. The PSDSs, school principals/school heads, teachers, parents, and community members who took part in the evaluation attended the said activity.

Separate research tools were used per group of identified respondents. Gender and stakeholder participation were noted during the evaluation, at least in terms of number of male and female participants.

Data triangulation was done through Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and review of related literatures/project documents.

Limitations of the study were time constraints, limited access to reliable historical data, incomplete Phil-IRI records at the schools, and the limited participation of some FGD and KII participants due to intervening concerns.

The evaluation team was composed of representatives of the EDUCO, DepED and ADMS, Inc. evaluators.

The roles and responsibilities of the team members were as follows:

a. DepEd - District Supervisors and Reading Coordinators. The DepEd representatives (PSDS/RC) were responsible for the random selection of pupils who took the Phil IRI test, the administration of the Phil-IRI test and the interpretation of the test results. They were also involved in the ocular inspection of the reading corners, the reading huts, and the reading materials.
b. External Evaluators/ADMS, Inc. evaluators. The evaluators were responsible for the conduct of FGDs and KIIs with the children, teachers, school administrators, and the parents and community members. ADMS was responsible for the consolidation of FGD and KII results, the Phil IRI test results and in writing of the ex post evaluation report.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Relevance

Results from the desk review and field research showed that the reading project was relevant and aligned to the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goal 4. Specifically, the project contributed towards the achievement of the SDG 4 target *"4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex."* On this note, results of the FGDs and KIIs conducted together with the Public Schools District Supervisors (PSDS), school principals and teachers, children, parents and community members showed that the project addressed the needs of the schools

and the communities for innovative reading programs that can help improve the learning proficiency of children.

All (100%) of those interviewed (school principals/school heads, teachers, parents and community members) said that the project is relevant and contributed much to the development of the reading skills of children.

In a scale of 1-4 where 1 is the lowest and 4 is the highest, a large majority (97%) of the respondent school principals/school heads and teachers gave a rating of 4 while 3% gave a rating of 3. All (100%) of the parents and community members gave a rating of 4. Reasons given for giving high relevance rating were as follows:

a. Conduct of Training Needs Assessment (TNA) for teachers helped raise awareness among school heads as to which teachers need skills enhancement and which ones were fit to teach reading.
b. Capacity building for teachers on reading techniques greatly helped the teachers in teaching the children how to read.
c. The reading materials developed during the project addressed the needs of the schools and the communities for reading materials.
d. The reading huts, reading corners and reading centers that were constructed/ established during the project addressed the needs of the children for safe reading areas that were conducive for learning.
e. The reading activities supported by the project made reading fun and interesting for the children.
f. The volunteer program, which involved "nanay teachers, parent readers and reading tutors from the community, introduced and supported by the project facilitated sharing of time and resources between the school and the community.

2. Efficiency

To gauge the children's reading ability levels, the Dep-Ed-PSDS/RC members of the evaluation team administered the Phil-IRI test to randomly selected pupils in the 36 treatment schools. The overall results of the Phil-IRI test showed that there was no distinct difference in the performance between the children from the schools with big population and the children from schools with medium to small population, which implies that the size and location of the school are not critical variables in implementing innovative reading programs. Instead, effectiveness and efficiency of the reading programs were more determined by the willingness of the school principals and/or school heads, teachers, parents and community members to work together, the economic status of the community and the innovativeness and consistency of the teachers, parents and community members in implementing the program activities. In turn, the existing conditions in terms of governance/cooperation, economic status and local culture affected the ability of the project to fully achieve its goals and objectives.

3. Effectiveness

The results of the actual conduct of the Phil-IRI in Filipino in the 36 treatment schools, with 256 pupils tested, showed that 51% were independent readers, 29% were instructional readers, 19% were frustration readers and 1% were non-readers. By comparison, the results of the Phil-IRI test in the 4 control schools, with 31 pupils tested, showed 19% are independent readers, 42% were instructional readers,36% were frustration readers, and 3% are non-readers. This means that while the subjects from the treatment group were predominantly independent readers, the subjects from the control group were predominantly

instructional readers. Moreover, the number of frustration readers and non-readers in the control group was higher compared to that of the treatment group. Based on this data, we can safely say that the subjects under the treatment group were more literate compared to that of the control group. The same trend can also be observed in the historical data of the Filipino Phil-IRI test conducted in the treatment schools from school year 2012-2013 to school year 2017-2018.

Historical data showed that pupils from the treatment schools are predominantly instructional and independent readers. On the other hand, historical data of the English Phil-IRI test results from school year 2012-2013 to school year 2017-2018 showed that pupils from the treatment schools are predominantly instructional readers. The historical data for Filipino and English test results showed that children scored higher in Filipino (predominantly independent readers) compared to English where the children tested scored predominantly at the instructional level.

Based on the consolidated historical results of the Phil-IRI in 10 sample schools (those with completed results at the cut-off date), there was no significant difference in the reading literacy levels of the pupils from 2012-2018. In fact, there was a very slight upward trend in the Phil-IRI scores from 2012-2018. The upward trend however was insignificant because it was within the +3/-3 margin of error.

According to the teachers and the PSDSs interviewed, there has been no formal evaluation of the MTB-MLE program of the DepEd, thus, with the limited data on hand, it is inconclusive as to whether or not the MTBMLE program is contributing to the improvement of child-literacy. More information and deeper study should be conducted in this area to arrive at a sound conclusion.

4. Impact

Overall, the project made a difference in the academic performance of the pupils who were involved in the reading program. During the FGDs with the high school teachers, the respondents said that those coming from schools which were recipients of the reading project tend to have more positive attitude towards learning compared to those students coming from other schools., which is indicated by active participation in academic activities, raising more relevant questions in class and proactively seeking help from their teachers when they do not understand lessons.

5. Sustainability

Two years after the end of the collaboration with Educo on the reading program, around 92% (33 of 36 schools covered by the study) still implement the reading programs started during the project. Fifteen (15) of these schools can be considered as still actively implementing their reading programs with full support from the school PTA and the community. Reading programs that were initiated during the project are still being implemented in these schools. These reading programs include daily reading tutorials with volunteer parents/community members, community-based reading programs, reading huts are still functional in some of the schools, regular remedial reading classes/sessions conducted, reading centers are properly maintained and junior librarians are still active. Four (4) of the schools are still implementing reading programs initiated during the project at a lesser degree. This means that they no longer have reading centres, but they have functional reading corners where the pupils can read. There are still a few reading volunteers who come to school from time to time and the teachers are still conducting remedial reading sessions. The remaining 14 schools are still implementing the reading project at the classroom level; meaning, they still have the reading corners and some reading materials in the reading corners but

they no longer have volunteer readers to assist the teachers in teaching the children how to read. Three (3) of the schools no longer implement the reading programs initiated during the project life.

LESSONS LEARNED

There were a number of valuable lessons learned by the stakeholders from the implementation of the reading program. During the participatory analysis, the participants identified the following significant learnings:

- **Physical Aspects**

• The size and location of the schools do not have significant impact on quality of the project implementation. What really mattered during the implementation is the cooperation of the stakeholders and the willingness of the school heads, teachers, parents, community members and the BLGU officials to work together towards the improvement of the schools and betterment of the children.

• DepEd has very limited resources and it cannot meet all the financial requirements of the schools. As it is, school heads, teachers and parents should be very resourceful in finding additional resources.

• The reading centers were turned over to the schools without any proper pre-conditions for its management and maintenance. This resulted in the conversion of the reading centers into offices and classrooms.

• The use of technology like visual aid, TV and internet is very important.

- **Organizational Aspects**

• There is a need for evidence-based school programming. Available data should be analyzed and used as basis for developing school-based programs and projects.

• There is a need to work closely with partners to ensure sharing of resources.

• There is a need for close monitoring of programs and projects to ensure its proper implementation.

• Most of the schools do not have proper sustainability plans for the reading program. At most, they have developed work plans on how to continue the reading program but no steps were identified as to how these work plans should be implemented and where the schools will source out funds for its implementation.

•Data-banking and information banking of results and lessons learned from programs and projects should be implemented.

• Child-profiling is not done. Profile should be done to determine the profile of the child, who are readers, non-readers, etc. Checklist should be provided to teachers.

- **Human Resource**

• Teachers who were trained under the reading program were not asked to develop re-entry and action plan which outline how they intend to apply what they learned from the training once they return to their respective schools.

• There is a need to screen and train reading/teaching volunteers to ensure quality learning.

• In most schools, the SPG officers are involved in all of the programs of the school. This caused multiple burden on the part of the children and may affect their ability to focus on their studies.

• The level of literacy of the parents can affect the reading abilities of the children. During the FGDs, the parents and the teachers said that children whose parents do not know how to read are more likely to have reading difficulties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the evaluation and the results of the participatory analysis with the DepEd administrators, teachers, parents and community members, the following are the recommendations from the different sectors:

Relevance

DepEd Administrators, School Heads and Teachers recommendations to the School Heads and the Teachers:

1. **Conduct of Training Needs Assessment (TNA)**. Schools head should regularly conduct training needs assessment for teachers to determine individual needs. The results of the TNA should guide the school heads as to which teacher he/she should send to specific trainings and seminars.

Efficiency

DepEd Administrators, School Heads and Teachers recommendations to the School Heads and the Teachers:

1. **Regular monitoring and evaluation of school reading programs**. Regular monitoring should be conducted on all aspects of the program. Counterpart or equity coming from the school's MOOE, from the BLGUs and the other partners should be properly tracked for accountability.

2. **Intensified class monitoring and profiling of pupils for home visitation**. Teachers should maintain a database of the profile of their pupils. They need to know which pupils are not doing so well in class and need to be given remedial sessions and home visitations when needed.

3. **Officials/School Heads must perform their roles/functions to the fullest**. They need to closely monitor the performance of their teachers and the pupils. They also need to monitor the PPA's implementation vis-à-vis SIP priorities.

Effectiveness

DepEd Administrators, School Heads and Teachers recommendations to the School Heads and the Teachers:

1. **Coordination with SPED for children with special needs**. Not all schools can address the needs of children with special needs. They should be referred to schools that offer SPED classes.

2. **Proper selection guidelines and training of volunteers**. Proper screening of volunteers should be done to ensure that they are competent enough to work with the children and teach them.

Recommendations from the children to the School Heads and Teachers:

3. **Reading corner decorations**. The children love colorful decorations, but they do not like too much of it. According to them, too much decorations, especially those that are hanging, can sometimes impede their movements inside the reading corners and they can be annoying.

4**. Group study inside the classroom**. Studying by groups can help boost their morale and help them learn faster. The children recommended that they be grouped into certain categories and they should have leaders in the group who will guide them in their group activities.

5. **More story books and reading materials**. The children would like to see new books in their reading corners. According to them, reading the same story books over and over can be very boring.

6. **Improve lighting and ventilation in the reading centers and libraries**. The children would like to have better lighting and electric fans inside the reading centers and libraries.

7. **Install TV inside the classroom**. The children want to have TVs in the classrooms so that they can watch educational shows.

8. **Play and learn**. The children would like to have more fun-teaching techniques where they can play and learn at the same time.

Recommendations from the children to the School Heads and Teachers:

1. **Reading corner decorations**. The children love colorful decorations, but they do not like too much of it. According to them, too much decorations, especially those that are hanging, can sometimes impede their movements inside the reading corners and they can be annoying.

Sustainability

DepEd Administrators, School Heads and Teachers recommendations to the School Heads and the Teachers:

1.1. **Encourage literacy classes for parents who could not read**. Schools should be encouraged to offer non-formal classes for parents who cannot read.

1.2. **Encourage the parents to set-up reading corners/study areas at home**. Having a reading/study area can help promote love for reading. The reading corners/study areas do not have to be elaborate.

1.3. **Schools should ask PTA for support**. To foster close coordination with the PTA, regular meetings should be conducted to discuss issues and concerns.

1.4. **Encourage the BLGUs to set-up Barangay Library**. A barangay library will provide the children with easy access to books and reading materials outside of the school.

1.5. **BLGUs and LGUs should allocate funds for education**. School heads, teachers and parents should find ways to work, encourage collaboration from the LGUs and the BLGUs.

1.6. **Strengthen school-community partnership through close coordination, rewards and**

recognition. Schools should recognize the contributions of their partners. Giving certificates of appreciation to partners can help strengthen partnership.

Recommendations from the Parents and Community Members/Barangay Officials to their co-parents and community members/Barangay officials:

1. **Assist in resource mobilization**. The parents and the community members should help the schools to raise funds for school improvements and purchase of books and reading materials.

2. **Full cooperation and regular meetings**. Teachers and parents should be invited during the barangay council sessions to present their issues and concerns involving the school and the pupils.

3. **Help promote love for learning.** Parents and community members can serve as volunteer tutors or readers. They can also help set-up reading centers and reading corners inside the school.

Recommendations from the children to the School Heads and Teachers:

1. **Better school facilities**. According to the children, they would like it very much if their chairs and tables are not dilapidated.

2. **Others**. They would also like it very much if the schools will implement waste segregation and set up materials recovery facility where they can find recyclable materials.

Recommendations of the Evaluation Team to Educo for future programming:

1. **Baseline and endline KAP assessment for project partners and beneficiaries**. To track the possible impact of the project and the behavioural change among partners and beneficiaries, Educo should consider conducting a baseline KAP (knowledge, attitudes and practices) assessment at the start of a project and then conduct an endline KAP assessment towards the end of the project life.

2. **Organization of community-based monitoring teams.** Participatory monitoring activities can help strengthen the involvement of the community and may help foster a sense of community ownership over the project. The results of the participatory monitoring should be presented to the local stakeholders so that the local stakeholders can help address the issues and concerns in the project implementation.

3. **Conduct regular Project Implementation Review together with partners.** Annual project implementation review together with the project partners can facilitate sharing of ideas and discussion on project related issues and concerns.

4. **Develop sound volunteer protocols.** Good volunteer engagement protocols should be established by Educo to ensure that project volunteers are able to deliver what the project needs. Sound volunteer protocols are also important to ensure the safety and protection of the volunteers.

5. **Establish strong working relationship with the DepEd National, Regional down to the local level.** During the FGDs with the PSDSs, the respondents said that they need the clearance of the "higher" offices before they can implement certain activities at the local level. Since the DepEd has so many activities programmed for each year, it is important to coordinate the project activities at the National or Regional level so that these activities may be included in the schools' programming.

6. **Gender analysis. Gender and development was not considered in the design of the reading program.** As it is, the evaluation team cannot assess the project based on something that was not in its original design. Given this limitation, the team only looked into the basic of equal access and equal opportunities for participation. If Educo wants to include gender and development into its future programming, it should conduct a separate gender assess on its projects.

7. Follow through the progress of the editing, approval and publication of the reading materials developed during the project, especially the Ortograpiya Bikol. Educo should make a follow through on these materials to ensure that they are approved, published, and put to proper use.