

## **PARTNERSHIP FOR TRANSPARENCY FUND**

### **Completion Assessment Report The G-Watch Monitoring of the Philippines Education Department's Text book Distribution System and Department of Works and Highways' Sub-contracting of Infrastructure Projects**

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The Government Watch (G-Watch) Project of the Ateneo School of Government undertook monitoring of the Department of Education Textbook Distribution Project and selected infrastructure projects of the Department of Public Works and Highways. Partnership for Transparency Fund provided a \$24,000 grant to the project.

#### ***Department of Education***

In 2003, the Department of Education (DepEd) delivered 37 million textbooks and teachers' manuals to more than 5,000 districts and high schools nationwide. The procurement cost Php 1.3 B (\$23M) and was funded from a loan from the World Bank. To address previous problems in delivery, such as delays and the poor quality of deliveries, DepEd initiated Textbook Count: National Monitoring of Textbook Delivery.

The program organized the suppliers' delivery schedules at the zone, division and high school and district levels and introduced a mechanism for on-the-spot monitoring and inspection of textbooks in all delivery locations. Civil society organizations were involved in the monitoring of the textbook deliveries up to the district level. The G-Watch project addressed the initial limitations of the Textbook Count by extending the monitoring up to the schools under the district. G-Watch monitored the onward delivery of 263,771 textbooks from 15 districts to 155 elementary schools in 4th to 6th class municipalities in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, the three island groups of the Philippines. The findings revealed that the difficulty in accessing the textbook distribution fund and the other administrative problems could lower public schools' access by as much as 21%, or Php 140 M in opportunity costs

#### ***Department of Public Works and Highways***

For the Department of Public Works and Highways, G-Watch monitored twenty-six infrastructure projects. Of the 26 projects, 9 projects had been reported as completed and 17 were ongoing projects. Eleven of the 26 projects were assisted by official foreign development assistance or by multilateral funding sources. Fifteen of the projects were funded locally. Sixteen of the projects were in Luzon, four in the Visayas and six in

Mindanao. In this case, the weak capacity of the agency to monitor its yearly projects (in most cases, only 10-15% of the projects) manifested in long delays and major cost increases in project implementation, especially in the foreign assisted projects

### ***Official response to monitoring.***

In both instances, agreements were signed with both government agencies and the project, allowing G- to monitor the projects and providing the project access to records and documents on the projects being monitored.

In the case of the DepEd, the agency utilized the report to explore ways of improving its textbook delivery system, issuing a directive on the proper utilization of the textbook distribution fund, while the Commission on Audit, having learned of the reluctance of teachers to implement the project properly because of the Audit rules, offered reasonable solutions to the implementation bottlenecks.

The DPWH responded to the report, whose findings were made in a forum which included government agencies as well as civil society organizations and contractors quote organizations, by reviewing the problematic projects and accepting that civil society monitoring of projects helped it strengthen its own monitoring system. The Office of the Ombudsman also initiated an investigation of two problematic projects in response to the report.

### ***Overall Assessment***

The G-Watch project, both in its project design and its implementation were successful in that they were not designed to solve all the problems of the agencies as much as to test templates for civil society monitoring of projects. The project had an impact on corruption in the country through proving that with simple templates and simple objectives, monitoring of government performance by citizens could and should be done. In the case of the DepEd and the textbook monitoring project, the G-Watch project's monitoring templates are currently being utilized by other civil society organizations engaged in a national monitoring initiative called the Coalition against Corruption. For the DPWH, the fact that relatively large infrastructure projects could be monitored by non-engineers for both timeliness and for cost overruns gave the agency notice that there was scope for other sectors to monitor performance even in infrastructure projects.

In both instances, G-Watch's ability to develop very simple templates, its desire to work with the government agencies in the design of the template and its non-judgemental stance in making its findings known, and yet its ability to work with the Office of the Ombudsman, who followed up on the investigation of the cases, suggests that this method of work yields positive responses among government agencies, especially where reformists within government agencies are identified and their cooperation ensured.

At the earliest opportunity, the Ateneo School of Government sees itself training other institutions, including schools and universities in other locations in the country to implement the project and its tools. From the project's perspective, the earlier others learn how to use the templates, the better it is for everyone. They see their role as that of training other institutions to use them and localizing the project quickly, including training other institutions to utilize the tools with projects funded by Local Government Units.

From the assessor's viewpoint, the project is an unarguable success, in that it paved the way for other organizations to think about monitoring as a concept for citizen action. G-Watch has been held up as a project that can be done by almost anyone because of the simplicity of its tools. Local institutions such as the Boys Scouts and the Girls Scouts have been, and continue to be utilized by the project and its various models to do the monitoring. Even for agencies where corruption is seen to be endemic, it is possible, with great care, to be able to make inroads in the monitoring. The ability of the project to develop relationships with government agencies responsible for prosecution of corruption cases gave the project the clout and the influence to do what it needed to do and to let the appropriate agency follow through on the findings.

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