

Independent Completion Report (ICR) of Basic Education Support Program (BESP)
MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Initiative Summary

Initiative Name	Basic Education Support program (BESP)		
AidWorks initiative number	INH 574		
Commencement date	February 2009	Completion date	December 2012
Total Australian \$	7.2 million		
Total other \$	Nil		
Delivery organisation(s)	UNICEF		
Implementing partner(s)	Ministry of Education (MoE)		
Country/Region	Sri Lanka – South Asia		
Primary sector	Education		
Initiative objective/s	To support universal completion ¹ of primary education and improve learning achievement by building a child-friendly learning environment.		

Evaluation Summary

The ICR found that BESP has been very relevant to the Sri Lankan context and has been aligned with the priorities of the Sri Lankan government. It has been responsive to the needs of children in disadvantaged areas and to the particular needs of children in conflict affected areas. It has met a number of its targets but has been more effective in meeting its targets for access than for quality. It was ranked as of ‘Good Quality’ in the areas of relevance, efficiency and gender equality and of ‘Adequate Quality’ in the areas of effectiveness, sustainability, monitoring and evaluation and analysis and learning. The ICR found that while commendable progress has been made, especially in schools that were part of the project since 2009, schools in the North that joined BESP in 2011 (after the end of the conflict) need more work to consolidate achievements. As MoE has taken on the child-friendly approach and is planning to roll it out across the country, this review helped to take stock of achievements and analyse the challenges posed by some elements of the project. There is a need to reflect on the causal nexus that is assumed by project designers between school and classroom activities, and end results.

Evaluation Objective:

The objectives of this Independent Completion Report (ICR) were to:

1. Assess the performance of BESP against the program objectives, including the objectives of the expansion to the North following the MTR, in accordance with the evaluation criteria and questions specified in the evaluation Terms of Reference (TOR);
2. Assess accountability for expenditure of Australian public funds on BESP activities;
3. Assess how BESP has contributed to the objective of Education Sector Development Framework Program (ESDFP); and
4. Based on the findings of the evaluation and an assessment of the current situation, and taking into consideration AusAID’s current investment in the education sector and broader program objectives and policies, provide advice and recommendations on its future support to education in Sri Lanka.

1. _____

¹ Universal completion is regarded as a measure of Access, and an improvement in learning achievement as a measure of Quality.

Evaluation Completion Date: 19 January 2013 but final report accepted on 10 April 2013

Evaluation Team:

Prof. Angela Little – Team Leader

Dr. Wilfred Perera – Local Consultant

Mr. Muthu Sivagnanam – Local Consultant

Dr. James Jennings – AusAID Regional Education Adviser for South Asia – Guidance provided to the team

AusAID’s response to the evaluation report

Brief overview of AusAID’s assessment of the quality of the report (including any issues with evidence, findings, etc.)

AusAID Colombo considers this report is high quality. The evaluation studied and analysed the issues and achievements from school to national levels. The mission also conducted effective consultations with all stakeholders including education officials, teachers, principals, students and communities. The evaluation methodology used by the team was effective. The evaluation members worked individually, in pairs and as a team and undertook two field trips, one to the Northern and Eastern Provinces and the other to the Eastern, Central and Uva Provinces. The study critically analysed the targets set and achievements against baseline data. The team evaluated the overall objective of the program, two strategic results and 16 indicators and 16 targets. As well as rating against the five OECD criteria, additional AusAID criteria were also used to measure the effectiveness of the program. The team consisted of an experienced team leader along with two local consultants with extensive experience in the sector. AusAID’s Regional Education Adviser participated in the mission and provided advice and guidance throughout the process.

AusAID’s overall response to the findings and recommendations

Overall, AusAID is happy with the findings and supportive of the recommendations. The team correctly identified the issues and this helped them to develop pertinent findings. The team looked beyond the BESP and considered other activities functioning in Sri Lanka and pointed out several critical aspects which affect sustainability.

Brief comments on future directions of sector/program/initiative

AusAID has decided to implement recommendation 10.3 to continue through UNICEF support to the areas of the Northern Province which received less support under BESP. All five actions of this recommendation will be implemented through a new project with UNICEF called the Child Friendly Education Program. Australia is also supporting education in Sri Lanka through the Transforming Schools Education Project (TSEP) in through a Trust Fund managed by the World Bank. This is a nation-wide program which supports the Government of Sri Lanka’s education sector plan.

MoE, NIE and UNICEF were provided the opportunity to comment on the draft final ICR and have been provided with a copy of the final report. As a learning and dissemination activity, and at the same time as the first review of TSEP in April 2013, AusAID held a presentation and discussion on the recommendations of the BESP ICR. This was chaired by the Additional Secretary MoE and attended by a wide range of officials from MoE, National Institute of Education (NIE), Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils, and University of Colombo as well as representatives from donor organisations including UNICEF, GIZ, UNESCO and World Bank. There was a lively discussion and the group broadly agreed with the issues and recommendations set out in the ICR. The ICR and this management response will be uploaded to the AusAID website.

Any other key matters raised in the report:

There are two other important matters raised by the report. Many of the indicators aggregate data across schools leading to district figures. But BESP is a school-level intervention and data should have been aggregated at school level and not at the district level. For historical reasons, the district may have been used as a unit of reporting. In the new support through UNICEF this has been addressed. The other area is the integration of the child-friendly approach (CFA) with MoE’s school based management system called Program for School Improvement (PSI). PSI has been rolled out since 2006 and the ICR pointed out that there could have been better consideration of PSI by BESP designers and implementers to avoid duplication of the two approaches. Integrating these two approaches will require ongoing advocacy and is mentioned in 10.6 below.

AusAID's response to the specific recommendations made in the report:

Recommendation		AusAID's response	Actions	Responsibility
10.1	Child Friendly approach should continue as a high priority within the partner government's Education Sector Development Framework Program (ESDFP), the ESDFP budget and UNICEF country program budget respectively.	Agree. MoE and UNICEF should also encourage support of CFA by other development partners	AusAID will continue to advocate with the partner government and the World Bank to implement the child friendly approach within the current education program (ESDFP)	AusAID Colombo
10.2	<p>UNICEF and the MOE should complete the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Distribute the education toolkit (ii) Develop the CFA guideline for education officials (iii) Advance plans for the survey necessary to provide evidence for Indicator 12 (iv) Complete the out of school survey report (v) Complete and distribute the CFA training manual (vi) Complete teacher training manuals for key stages 1 and 2 (vii) Complete the Basic Literacy Centre training manual 	Agree	UNICEF reported in the BESP Final Report, which was submitted to AusAID in February 2013, that all these activities have been completed.	UNICEF and MOE

10.3	<p>Based on its priorities and fund availability, AusAID may consider an extension of support to the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the National Institute of Education (NIE) and the Provinces through UNICEF to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Consolidate its work in selected schools. (ii) Conduct a critical review of the CFA causal model that links school and classroom activities with results. (iii) Strengthen the analysis of school-based results and activities and lessons to be learned as CFA is integrated into ESDFP. (iv) Support a process of quality assurance of all technical outputs (e.g. Child Friendly guidance manual, implementation guidelines, monitoring tools, curriculum guidelines). (v) Integrate a revised results-based M&E system into ESDFP. 	<p>Agree. A new project named the Child Friendly Education (CFEP) has been designed and approved to address these recommendations.</p>	<p>AusAID Colombo will work with UNICEF and MOE to monitor the new project to ensure these actions are implemented.</p>	<p>AusAID Colombo, UNICEF and MOE</p>
10.4	<p>AusAID should continue to support the implementation of CFA through the mandated responsibilities of the MoE, NIE and the provinces through its ongoing support to ESDFP via the World Bank. Through its ongoing support to ESDFP it should continue to advocate for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Intensive support to primary education. (ii) The implementation of CFA. (iii) The implementation of the inclusive education policy. (iv) The creation of a cadre for primary education. (v) Separate budgets and accountability for expenditure on for primary education. (vi) Improved systems for assessing and promoting learning in primary education. 	<p>Agree</p>	<p>AusAID Colombo will, through its partnership with World Bank in the Transforming Schools Education Project (TSEP), advocate for each of these actions and monitor their implementation. This will be done through: 1) participation in two annual reviews, one of TSEP with World Bank and MOE and one a joint mission with all the donors supporting ESDFP 2) participation in regular monitoring visits with the World Bank consultancy support team and 3) through participation in donor meetings</p>	<p>AusAID Colombo</p>

10.5	AusAID funds should also be used to promote analysis and learning by the community of educators and promote evidence-based planning through research and integrated monitoring systems. This report could be used as the basis of one such exercise in analysis and learning.	Agree. AusAID recognises the value of assessments by local authorities.	This will be included in the new project managed by UNICEF and partially through the TSEP technical assistance fund managed by World Bank.	AusAID Colombo, UNICEF and World Bank
10.6	<p>With careful consideration of best practices and government ownership, MoE, NIE, UNICEF and other development partners should:</p> <p>(i) Merge CFA and government's Program for School Improvement (PSI) approaches to school level planning and management within ESDFP to capitalise on their respective practices.</p> <p>(ii) Establish and ensure a timely flow of funds to schools to assist the development of school plans and their implementation.</p>	Agree	These are both areas that will require advocacy and technical advice and inputs at the appropriate times. They are processes that will need to be influenced over time through AusAID Colombo's active participation in review missions and regular meetings with World Bank, with all donors and with MOE and donors supporting the sector.	AusAID Colombo with MOE, NIE UNICEF
10.7	MOE, the NIE and Development Partners (DPs) should increase opportunities for professional learning from analyses of specific activities (e.g. school level planning and management, processes, teaching and learning processes and outcomes, children's participation in school planning and management, disparity analysis).	Agree. More participatory self-assessments and planning processes are priorities of AusAID approach.	These types of activities will be considered under the current ESDFP. For the first time SWAp-type of donor coordination has been introduced to Sri Lanka through the ESDFP. Learning on specific activities could be done by relevant partners (e.g. social-cohesion by GIZ) according to their resources and skills and share with other development partners.	AusAID Colombo with MOE, NIE and other DPs