A World Class Education Program

Jakarta. “USAID will help primary schools, junior secondary schools and madrasahs in Indonesia to give students access to world class education” said US Ambassador, Scot Marciel in USAID PRIORITAS program launching in Jakarta (3/10).

“We hope that this program will help students in Indonesia to develop their potential and put them on the path to success,” he added.

USAID Prioritizing Reform, Innovation, and Opportunities for Reaching Indonesia’s Teachers, Administrators, and Students (PRIORITAS) is a USAID-funded program designed to improve access to quality education for children in Indonesia.

Over five years USAID PRIORITAS will help improve the quality and relevance of teaching and learning in 10 provinces including Aceh, North Sumatra, Banten, West Java, Central Java, East Java, South Sulawesi, East Nusa Tenggara, West Nusa Tenggara and Papua.

This program will reach around 300,000 students in more than 1,400 primary schools/madrasah ibtidayah and junior secondary schools/madrasah tsanawiyah, as well as indirectly reaching hundreds of schools in districts which were involved in the Decentralized Basic Education (DBE) project.

(Anw)

Dissemination of Good Practices

ONE of the USAID PRIORITAS programs in the first year is to disseminate various good practices in education. The successful results of DBE’s impact will be extended through USAID PRIORITAS.

For example, the successful implementation of School Based Management (SBM) in SDN Sedati Gede 2, Sidoarjo, Jawa Timur has created accountability in managing the school, making it open, effective and efficient. This has supported the effective implementation of Active, Effective and Enjoyable Learning (PAKEM).

Another example is SMPN I Telululimpoe, South Sulawesi that has successfully developed laboratory-based classes. Learning media are available in every class to support the implementation of active learning. These good practices will be disseminated through USAID PRIORITAS. (Anw)
Prof. Dr. Nur Syam

Dr. Indroyono S.

THE Coordinating Minister of People’s Welfare (Menko Kesra) who was represented by the Secretary of Menko Kesra, Dr. Indroyono Soesilo, conveyed his warm welcome to the program through his opening remarks in the USAID PRIORITAS program launch. His hope is that the program can contribute to developing character education for students, teachers, school principals and education institutions in accordance with local customs and Indonesian culture based on Pancasila values.

“Through these examples, it is expected that this program will inspire other schools and other regions to do the same. We hope that the USAID PRIORITAS program will support the basic education policies drawn up by the government”, said Mr. Indroyono.

Reaching Many More Madrasahs (Islamic School)

US Government already had a positive impact on improving the quality of madrasahs,” said Prof. Dr. Nur Syam. (Anw)

MTsN Nglawak Nganjuk, East Java Student presenting a demonstration on the human excretion system in a video shown at the project launch. Through USAID PRIORITAS, it is expected that more madrasahs will implement good practices like this.

Early Grade Reading Ability Diagnosis with EGRA

An EGRA Assessor assessing an early grade student’s reading ability.

ONE of the focuses of the USAID PRIORITAS program is to improve the reading ability of early grade students. To help teachers and schools improve the reading ability of their early grade students, USAID PRIORITAS has made an assessment of the reading ability of early grade students using an instrument called EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment).

Why have we used EGRA to assess reading ability in early grade? Because EGRA is capable of diagnosing difficulties experienced by children in early grade reading. By recognizing difficulties faced by children, it is possible to develop programs to help them.

EGRA has been proven to be appropriate for collecting baseline data that can be used to create programs to improve children’s ability to read in early grade. Up to 2010, EGRA had been implemented in 50 countries using 30 different languages. This extensive implementation shows that EGRA is a good instrument to describe the condition of early grade students’ reading ability.

The EGRA test includes: (1) naming letters, (2) differentiating initial letter sounds, (3) reading familiar words, (4) reading non-meaningful words, (5) oral fluency and comprehension, (6) listening comprehension. Besides their ability to read, EGRA also assesses students’ reading speed and their understanding of the reading material.

The EGRA test is carried out individually and takes about 15 minutes for each child. In the USAID PRIORITAS project, EGRA utilized tablet computers using the TANGERINE program to record the results of the tests. EGRA was implemented in 7 provinces, in 23 districts/cities and 184 schools with 4,416 students between 19 November and 7 December 2012.  

(Hw)
USAID PRIORITAS Program Impact Indicators

In November – December 2012, the enumerator teams which included lecturers, school supervisors, teachers, school principals, and college students visited a number of schools in 23 districts in the 7 partner provinces. They observed teachers teaching, interviewed school principals and school committee members and gave tests in Mathematics, Bahasa Indonesia, and Science to SD/MI and SMP/MTs students. The team also interviewed senior staff of Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) and key staff of District and Provincial Education Offices. What were they doing?

THE teams were collecting information about the conditions in the field before the USAID PRIORITAS program is implemented. The data collected will be compared with the conditions after the program has been implemented in the years to come. The result of the comparison will draw a conclusion as to whether or not the program has reached its expected targets.

The data collected is related to the three main components of USAID PRIORITAS in helping to improve the quality of education. What are the success indicators for the three component of the program?

I. Quality and Relevance of Education

The main indicators related to the improvement of learning quality in school can be observed from the way primary and junior secondary school teachers teach: do they allow an active role in lessons to students rather than just giving lectures in front of the class. Another indicator concerns the school principal’s leadership role in relation to teaching and learning: are principals regularly observing teachers teaching and providing inputs to improve their professionalism. The impact of the improvement effort is measured by assessing the students’ achievement, especially in Mathematics, Bahasa Indonesia and Science.

In order to improve teaching practices, active learning methods must also be practiced in teacher training institutions (TTIs). Therefore, USAID PRIORITAS is also helping to improve the quality of teacher education in these TTIs. The indicators of success are measured by the extent of the implementation of active learning by TTI lecturers and by their students as prospective teachers. Further indicators relate to the extent of activities to improve teachers’ professionalism such as in-service teacher training and research.

2. Governance and Management

Indicators related to the improvement of management and governance in school are assessed partly through the planning processes: is the school’s activity planning and budget prepared jointly with a variety of stakeholders (participative), available for anyone who wants to see it (transparent) and is the school management held accountable for the implementation of the plan. At district level, the indicators for improving governance and management are measured by the availability of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) in the district and provincial education offices and how far analysis of the data is used to support formulation of education policies.

3. Coordination between Institutions

Coordination between education institutions and government in an effort to increase the quality of education is measured by the availability of plans and budgets to empower teachers – to raise teacher’s professionalism – and whether or not the planning is done jointly with education institutions such as the Provincial Quality Assurance Institutes (LPMP), TTIs and other organizations.

Studies of Provincial and District Education Needs

In order to get inputs to support program implementation, USAID PRIORITAS has conducted studies of education needs in the PRIORITAS partner districts and provinces. The assessment used focus group discussions (FGD) and interview methods and involved many education stakeholders at the provincial and district levels, such as the district and provincial education offices, the ministry of religious affairs offices, regional planning agencies, regional personnel agencies, school principals, teachers, supervisors and education boards.

This activity took place during October-November 2012 in every USAID PRIORITAS partner districts. In North Sumatra, for example, the assessment has produced recommendations that there is a need to strengthen coordination in the education sector. As part of a follow up plan, the province have agreed to schedule a periodical FGD.

In West Java, the FGD has become a forum to evaluate the implementation of DBE program. Yasa Sarnedi HS, Head of the Basic Education section of the Provincial Education Office in West Java, remarked that support from the provincial government was lacking during DBE because there was a communication barrier. “At that time DBE coordinated more directly with the districts,” he explained. Under USAID PRIORITAS, the Provincial Education Office in West Java wants to be more actively involved in the implementation of the program, especially in coordinating with provincial stakeholders and with the districts.

Prof. Dr. H. AT Soegito, S.H., M.M, Head of the Provincial Education Office in Central Java, believes that the Provincial Education Offices has a lot of homework to do. “It requires a partner such as PRIORITAS to coordinate the assessment of provincial needs and the needs of education beneficiaries in the districts,” he said during an FGD in Central Java.

Kom
DBE Program Final Evaluation

Jakarta. “DBE can be said to be a very successful program. It is in line with the Indonesian Government’s policies that focus on improving teachers’ professionalism, teacher certification and capacity building for teacher training institution,” said Dr. David P. Evans, an independent researcher for JBS International during the DBE (Decentralized Basic Education) Program Final Evaluation Workshop on October 12. David was appointed the coordinator of the DBE Final Evaluation team, which included international and Indonesian education experts.

The DBE program evaluation results were presented at the workshop, which also discussed efforts made by USAID together with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Coordinating Ministry of People’s Welfare to address weaknesses in the program found during the evaluation in order to sustain its success.

According to Dr. M. Basri Wello, one of the evaluation team, the DBE program has indeed successfully developed management and governance capacity in the education service in the District Education Offices, Primary Schools and Madrasah Ibtidayah (SD/M) and Junior Secondary School and Madrasah Tsanawiyah (SMP/MTs). “However, it is unfortunate, the impact on the capacity building has been lessened by government employee rotation policies that often result in the frequent replacement of key personnel such as school principals,” said the lecturer at Universitas Negeri Makasar (UNM).

The DBE Program was implemented from 2005 until 2011, partnering with 72 districts in seven provinces in Indonesia. The provinces are: Aceh, North Sumatra, Banten, West Java, Central Java, East Java, and South Sulawesi. The objective of the program was to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Primary Schools and Madrasah Ibtidayah (SD/M) and Junior Secondary School and Madrasah Tsanawiyah (SMP/MTs) through promoting active, contextual and relevant learning activities. DBE also supported planning and budgeting in schools/madrasahs and districts that is accountable, transparent, and participative. This was accomplished through training for school principals and school committees on leadership and school-based management; and providing methods and tools for planning, budgeting, facility management and human resource management for district education offices. At the end of the program, DBE directly benefited 1,476 schools, 57,400 educators and 480,000 students. In addition, 84 districts and 30,000 schools disseminated good practices from DBE using their own budgets and resources.

Although DBE’s achievements were very successful, many goals have not been totally achieved. As an example, schools that had developed successfully during the project lost momentum when school principals were replaced by new school principals who did not receive support to help them understand the DBE program. In some schools active learning was fading because teachers need continuing support and refresher training to maintain their ability to implement active learning.

In some places public support for schools decreased and school planning was not taken seriously, because the public perceived that there was “free education”, which did not need their support after the government introduced School Operational Assistance Funds (BOS). Furthermore, the evaluation recommended that coordination between the DBE program components and with the Indonesian Government should be improved. (Anw)

Eric Postel says Lessons at SMPN 8 Bogor are “Excellent”

Bogor. Eric Posten, USAID Assistant Administrator paid a visit to SMPN 8 Bogor on October 30, to see at first-hand activities in a DBE partner school, which has now become a USAID PRIORITAS partner school. He visited several classes, as well as the science laboratory and library. He first visited a science class. Students were very active performing and experimenting on acid and alkaline liquids using simple and easily available materials. The students then discussed the results of their findings in groups.

In an English language class, students shared their learning experience and their ambitions in English. Muhammad Irfan, one of the 9th Grade students who this year represented West Java in the National Physics Olympics, said “I like the way my teachers teach us. The way we learn keeps me enthusiastic and relaxed.” Andini, 8th Grade student also shared her experience and ambitions in English. “I want to become a politician who can improve Indonesia,” she said confidently.

Commenting on a student’s presentation, Eric said “Excellent”. The word represented a proud moment for the students. At the end of the visit, there was a discussion between the USAID team, the school principal, and the Head of Basic Education from the District Education Office in Bogor (Hj. Yayah Warisah, M.Pd), who was present during the visit. The international visitor felt that the lessons in SMPN 8 are very interesting and meaningful. He encouraged both public and private schools in Bogor to replicate the model. (Yti/Din)
Aceh Vice Governor: Prioritize Learning Quality

Aceh Vice Governor, Muzakir Manaf will focus the development of education in Aceh on the quality aspect, especially improving the quality of learning in schools. “Starting this year, we have to focus on the quality of learning in schools, both for students and teachers,” said Muzakir, which is Muzakir Manaf’s nickname.

Banda Aceh. During the launch of USAID PRIORITAS in Aceh on 21 November the Aceh Vice Governor stated that Aceh Province was supporting and hoped that everyone would support the implementation of the USAID PRIORITAS program. “When the Government and USAID chose Aceh as one of the target provinces for the PRIORITAS program, the Aceh Government welcomed this enthusiastically,” explained the Vice Governor.

Their enthusiasm was well founded. A presentation by the Aceh Regional Development Planning Board (Bappeda) of the Aceh Mid Term Development Plan for the education sector in 2012 showed that the quality of education and human resources in Aceh is still low. This can be seen from the ranking of the secondary education graduates who entered college in 2011. Aceh still ranks 31 in Science and 25 in Social Science out of 34 provinces.

In addition, the results of the teachers’ competency test in 2012 placed Aceh province in 28th place. This was taken into consideration when the Aceh government drew up its medium term plan for the period to 2017. “We should not just consider physical development [school building]. The main responsibility that we have right now is to improve the quality of education for the future of Acehnese children,” said the Vice Governor.

“District Education Offices should focus on improving the quality of education, while constructing school buildings should be taken care of by the Public Works department!” he continued.

In Aceh Province, USAID PRIORITAS will continue to work in the DBE partner districts which are Banda Aceh City, Aceh Besar,Pidie, Bireun and Central Aceh. There will be two further partner districts in the first year: Bener Meriah and Aceh Jaya. USAID PRIORITAS in Aceh is intending to add 6 more partner districts in the second year of the project.

To fulfill the Vice Governor’s instructions, the Head of the Aceh Provincial Education Office, Drs. Anas M. Adam expressed his team’s support and readiness to cooperate with PRIORITAS, “We welcome the program and are ready to work together because what it is being implemented by the project is in line with the District and Provincial Education Office programs,” said Anas.

Anas also welcomed the training program for the facilitators in each districts, “District facilitators are important because they become a district asset and will continue the quality improvement program after the USAID PRIORITAS program ended,” Anas hoped.

Mualém’s and Anas’s expectations were supported by other education stakeholders including district and provincial representatives who attended the USAID PRIORITAS program launch. They are certain that the program will make a meaningful contribution to education quality improvement in Aceh. “We are ready to support this program,” said Bardan Sahidi, from the Education Commission of the Aceh Legislature.

Integrated Education Stakeholder Coordination

Banda Aceh. TKPPA (Tim Koordinasi Pembangunan Pendidikan Aceh) or the Aceh Education Development Coordinating Team together with various education stakeholders at provincial level and education donor institutions in Aceh organized a coordination meeting on 16 October that was attended by Aceh Governor, Dr. Zaini Abdullah. TKPPA meetings have proven to be strategic and productive. In 2012 TKPPA successfully supported the Aceh Provincial policy on the acceleration of implementing Minimum Service Standards (SMP), equity strategy technical guidelines, the Governor’s Decree on inclusive education, and the Governor’s Decree on Early Childhood Education (PAUD). TKPPA allows institutions to coordinate to avoid overlapping activities. Donor institutions are also able to share good practices.

During the meeting the Aceh Government ordered six activities to be carried out by TKPP; they are: 1) carry out their duties to improve education in Aceh, 2) hold seminars to collect inputs and ideas from the public, 3) design a strategy for the implementation of Islamic education, 4) design a strategy to improve education quality, 5) the Regional Development Planning Board should coordinate and implement research into district programs to ensure they are in line with the medium term provincial plan and the Aceh Five-Year Educational Development Plan, and 6) study patterns of teacher professional development which can be applied in real conditions. (Tmk)
USAID Gives Award to North Sumatra Acting Governor

Medan, USAID Education Director, Margaret Sancho, gave an award to North Sumatra acting Governor, H. Gatot Pujo Nugroho ST for his commitment to improving basic education quality through replicating the USAID DBE (Decentralized Basic Education) program in every district in the province. The award was presented during the USAID PRIORITAS program launch in North Sumatra Province at the Aryaduta Hotel, Medan on 14 November.

Margaret Sancho expressed USAID’s appreciation of the governor’s commitment to raising basic education standards and building on the DBE program. The North Sumatra Provincial Government has used Rp. 4.5 billion of provincial budget funds to train 1,020 teachers using trainers and modules developed by DBE. The training has directly benefitted about 50,000 students in 33 districts.

The US Consul General for Sumatra Island, Kathryn A. Crockart praised the governor’s commitment to increasing the quality of basic education. The Consul General said that quality basic education provision requires a strong commitment. The government should not be satisfied with the existing education system. Education must continue to develop. “There is always room for improvement.” This can be achieved through cooperation, such as partnership between the national and regional governments, between parents and students and teachers, as well as between countries,” said Kathryn A. Crockart.

The governor expressed his thanks and pleasure on receiving the award that was given by USAID. According to the governor, establishing quality education does not mean only providing physical facilities. Quality education requires good management and the support of good human resources.

Moreover, the governor emphasized the importance of cooperating and partnering with a variety of stakeholders. The provincial government needs support from everyone, including from the public, private sector and donors. “Contributions from everyone are appreciated. The provincial government is very open and happily welcomes the partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID),” said Gatot Pujo Nugroho.

During a press conference the governor encouraged districts to disseminate DBE and USAID PRIORITAS good practices. According to the governor, the more training teachers get, the better the quality of the education will be.” The media also should be active in reminding USAID PRIORITAS partner districts to replicate the good practices,” the governor added. (Eh)

DBE Dissemination

The USAID partnership in basic education in North Sumatra started in 2005 with the Decentralized Basic Education (DBE) program. From 2005-2011, USAID DBE program successfully built capacity for 2,121 teachers in 236 schools (Primary School, Junior Secondary School and Madrasah) and directly benefitted about 50,000 students in 8 DBE partner districts.

Furthermore the DBE program extended its reach to 16 more districts by using the Provincial and District Budgets and School Operational Assistance Funds to the amount of Rp 2.6 billion to train 5,161 educators.

Provincial Stakeholder Agrees to Hold Routine FGD

A RECENT study at the provincial level resulted in recommendations to strengthen coordination within the education sector. As a follow up plan, stakeholders in education have agreed to schedule routine FGD (Focus Group Discussions). The FGD will discuss, monitor and evaluate progress in the USAID PRIORITAS program.

The North Sumatra Secretary of the Provincial Education Office, Drs. Bahaudin Manik hopes that the study can help the Education Office achieve success indicators that have been set nationally. “There are seven targets nationally and internationally that have been set for the province. The seven targets are the measures of success for the education system. We hope that USAID PRIORITAS can help North Sumatra province to reach their target,” said Bahaudin Manik.

Besides at the provincial level, a similar study has taken place in the three new USAID PRIORITAS partner districts. They are Medan, Labuhan Batu and South Nias. According to Agus Prayitno, the USAID PRIORITAS Whole School Development (WSD) Specialist, the early study was intended to provide a description of the conditions of education in the partner districts.

“The results of the study will be used to measure the program starting point,” explained Agus Prayitno. During the early study, the USAID PRIORITAS team made field visits and held discussions with the District Education Offices, Sub-district Offices, Ministry of Religious Affairs offices, teachers, supervisors, the Regional Development Planning Board, the Personnel Office, and Education Boards. The information collected was then analyzed and presented and conclusions agreed. (Eh)
**Vice Governor Rano Karno: Adapting Global Quality Education**

should be consistent in education policies; 20 percent of regional budgets should be directly allocated to students. This means teachers’ salaries should not be included in the 20 percent budget,” said the former actor-turned politician, who won the Citra award, in his speech.

Vice Governor Rano admitted that education in Indonesia is a little behind other countries. “If we don’t adopt changes, we will be left behind. But of course, we cannot disregard our local environment,” he said, reminding the audience that local customs and games can enrich basic education such as the local game called congklak.

The USAID Indonesia Mission Director, Andrew Sisson, who was present during the program launching in Banten, emphasized that the PRIORITAS program is a technical assistance project based on the comprehensive partnership between the United States and Indonesian Governments. The education aid program in Banten Province is part of the USAID education program with a total amount of US$ 83.7 million, which aims to improve the quality of education in 10 provinces. “The goal is to increase cooperation and intensify the relationship between the countries, especially in improving the quality of education in Indonesia,” he said.

The Head of the Provincial Education Office, Dr. Hudaya Latuconsia stated that the education assistance through the USAID PRIORITAS program will focus on raising teacher competency standards and not be in the form of monetary aid. The USAID PRIORITAS program that will be implemented for five years in Banten province will work at first in five districts; they are Cilegon City, Tangerang City and Serang, Lebak and Pandeglang Districts. Three other districts will follow in the second year; they are Serang and South Tangerang Cities and Tangerang District.

In improving teacher competencies in Primary and Junior Secondary Schools and Madrasah, USAID PRIORITAS Banten will cooperate with the University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa and IAIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Serang.

(Nic)

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**The Joy of Learning in SMPN and MTsN Bayah, Lebak, Banten**

**BAYAH** is a remote sub-district in South Banten. In this remote area, DBE partner Junior Secondary School/Madrasah students enjoy learning cooperatively and contextually. They use the Bayah natural environment to apply the process of effective learning.

They are facing the future full of optimism supported by DBE which has been training and mentoring their teachers. They use the local environment to support their studies, both inside and outside the classroom. Good practices will be disseminated through USAID PRIORITAS in Banten. **(Nic/Ddn)**
**West Java Governor Welcomes Program**

**Bandung**, The USAID PRIORITAS that aims to expand access to quality basic education is very much “in line with the education program in West Java”. This statement was made the West Java Governor Ahmad Heryawan responding to news of the USAID PRIORITAS program in West Java, when program staff paid a visit to his office. Kang Aher, the governor’s nickname, explained that his team have planned for the last four years that the focus of developing education in West Java is accessibility.

“We have decided to concentrate on and put all of our efforts into ensuring access to education for every group of people in West Java, especially those who are still of school age,” he affirmed.

The governor expects that the USAID PRIORITAS program will be in line with other programs that are in progress. As a result, the program will be implemented in accordance and in harmony with other West Java education programs that aim to improve the quality of and better access to education.

The governor also expressed his hope that the USAID PRIORITAS program will be spread throughout the whole of West Java. Considering the program is planned in only thirteen districts in West Java, the governor stated his commitment to disseminate the program to the other thirteen districts in West Java. In order to fulfill that commitment, the governor will coordinate with the provincial parliament to prepare a special budget to support the USAID PRIORITAS program in West Java. (Ddn)

**USAID PRIORITAS in line with Medium Term Plan in West Java**

“The West Java provincial government welcomes every cooperation that has a positive impact on improving people’s welfare,” said the West Java Provincial Assistant for Welfare, Aip Rivai who delivered West Java Governor, Ahmad Heryawan’s speech at the USAID PRIORITAS program launch in West Java.

He believes that this program is in line with the Provincial Mid Term Development Plan in 2008-2013. USAID PRIORITAS will help the West Java Provincial Government to improve the quality of teaching and learning in 13 districts. This program will work together with Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) and Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung.

Jalu Cahyanto, USAID Program Manager, explained that West Java faces challenges in providing access to quality education for students and raising teachers’ professionalism. (Ddn)

**Examples for Early Grade Magazines**

**ONE** of the ways USAID PRIORITAS will support reading in the early grades is through an Early Grade Magazine. Two schools in two USAID PRIORITAS partner districts in West Java will be chosen to take part in this pilot project. Selected schools will act as a benchmark for other partner schools and regions.

USAID PRIORITAS in West Java will choose a group of 6-8 students and 3 teachers to become an editorial team. Students will be selected from 5 or 6 partner schools that have potential to develop good practices.

When the group has been formed it will be trained and helped to publish the magazine. Training will be focused on the steps and how-to’s in developing the magazine. The school editorial team will get supervision and support such as camera. The Early Grade Magazine will be managed by students and teachers in the project who will write about:

- Folk stories;
- Traditional games;
- School activities (such as enjoyable learning);
- Features/reflections/descriptions;
- Cartoons/caricatures;
- Reading related to favorite games;
- Colorful photos and illustrations;
- Cross-cutting issues: such as healthy living, enjoyable being at school, diversity; etc.

They will print 500 copies of the magazine created by students to be shared with other partner schools in West Java. It is expected that it will trigger other students’ creativity in USAID PRIORITAS partner schools.

After two years have passed, there will be evaluation for this program. It is hope that magazine will be sustainable and will establish a partnership between publisher and school. (Ddn)
A Good Opportunity to Develop Education

Semarang. The USAID PRIORITAS program was officially launched on Tuesday November 20 at the Hotel Santika, Semarang. The Secretary of the Provincial Government in Central Java, Hadi Prabowo representing the Governor, together with 13 representatives of partner districts, signed cooperation agreement with USAID PRIORITAS.

Also present during the launch were USAID Indonesia Education Director, Margaret Sancho, USAID PRIORITAS representative, Mark Heyward, the IAIN Walisongo Rector, the Head of the Provincial Ministry of Religious Affairs in Central Java, the Deputy Head of the Provincial Education Office in Central Java, the Purbalingga, Demak and Batang Regents and representatives from the rest of the 13 partner districts.

The USAID PRIORITAS education program in Central Java is also working with three universities; they are Universitas Negeri Semarang, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, and IAIN Walisongo. Lecturers in universities will get training to help them deliver quality education for college students who are prospective teachers, as well as supporting work with the USAID PRIORITAS district partners.

Margaret Sancho said that she hoped the program would be implemented in its entirety so that education institutions and schools involved will get the maximum benefit from the program.

Supporting Margaret Sancho’s statement, Hadi Prabowo gave a message to education stakeholders who were present at the launch asking them to maximize the education potential in their districts through USAID PRIORITAS. “The USAID PRIORITAS program is a good opportunity for educators in Central Java to excel and grow. Therefore, we should all take maximum advantage of this opportunity follow it up with real action by local governments and educational organizations to achieve our targets,” he added. (Arz)

Education Governance and Management Innovation in Purworejo

“TO FLOW with the current” is a motto of Drs. Bambang Aryawan, MM, the Head of the District Education Office in Purworejo, Central Java. This man, who speaks his mind clearly, said that he is ready to transform the face of education in Purworejo District. Because of his strong determination, Mr. Bambang welcomed the USAID PRIORITAS Project.

“There are many achievement of DBE that we have developed in Purworejo,” he reminisced. Purworejo is one of the DBE partner districts that have successfully improved education quality. They have developed a Strategic Plan and an education Annual Plan that has been implemented consistently, calculating local government allocations of School Operational Assistance Fund (BOS) that is in accordance with the district’s needs and resources, implementing teacher redeployment and improving learning quality using the Active, Creative, Joyful and Effective Learning (PAKEM) and Contextual Learning models,” he continued.

Purworejo district can still see the impact of the DBE program. The following are some innovations that have been implemented in Purworejo.

1. Equalizing and expanding access
   • Schools’ capacities exceed the ratio of the classrooms compared to the number of students and complies with the appropriate standards
   • Teacher deployment is in line with needs so that there will not be any new appointments for the next 4 years.

   The need for teachers can be fulfilled through the regrouping program (merging schools) and multi grade teaching (one teacher teaches in more than one grade because of number of students is low) in remote areas

2. Raising quality and relevance
   • Improving the capacity of supervisors, school principals, and teachers with PAKEM and other capacity building training
   • Training for school principals, committees and teachers together to implement improvement programs
   • Mentoring follow-up in PAKEM by supervisors who are also training facilitators
   • DBE replication from a cluster of schools in each of 2 sub-districts to all schools in Purworejo. The result of this replication can be seen by increased learning quality
   • Developing innovative schools that practice active and contextual learning and character education.

3. Public image
   • The “devout children with good characters” program is for Muslim students graduating from basic education who are able to read the Koran and perform prayers (sholat) correctly.
   • Well performing teachers and students at provincial and national levels

   According to Mr. Bambang, the DBE program has successfully united teachers, school principals, and supervisors in becoming active and, as a result, school capacity has been maximized. The success of DBE has convinced him to support program dissemination through USAID PRIORITAS. “My hope is that USAID PRIORITAS will be a partner that can disseminate learning innovations to support the advancement of education in Purworejo district,” he added. (Arz)

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“Because of USAID, my Teachers are Smart”

Surabaya. The USAID PRIORITAS program launch was held in East Java on 6 December 2012. Taking place in the Istana Ballroom, at the Surabaya Bumi Hotel, the USAID PRIORITAS program launch in East Java was special because it was attended by the US Ambassador for Indonesia, Mr. Scott Marcell, accompanied by the US Consul General in Surabaya, Mr. Joaquin F. Monserrat; the USAID Deputy Mission Director, Mr. Derrick Brown; the USAID Education Office Director Ms. Margaret Sancho and the USAID PRIORITAS COP, Mr. Stuart Weston. Meanwhile, from East Java, there were 277 invitees consisting of education stakeholders at the provincial level, including the Head of the Provincial Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Dr. H. Sudjak M.Ag; the Universitas Negeri Surabaya and Universitas Negeri Malang Rectors and 13 partner district heads or their representatives.

In his remarks, the US Ambassador for Indonesia said that through the presence of USAID PRIORITAS it is hoped to improve the quality of basic education in Indonesia at Primary School and Junior Secondary School levels. “This program is focused on interesting, relevant and effective learning approaches,” he said.

The launch program was opened with a Tari Payung (Umbrella Dance) by students with special needs from SMPN 29 Surabaya. The performance reflected USAID’s commitment to inclusive education in Indonesia. This was followed by a performance by SD Hargatuah X Juanda Sidoarjo, which was a DBe partner school. The performance was called “Celoteh Anak” or “Babbling Children”. They performed energetically and were happy to welcome the USAID PRIORITAS program. “Welcome back USAID, because of USAID my teachers became smarter,” said one child who was applauded by the audience.

The Head of Education Board in East Java, Prof. Dr. H. Zainudinn Malik said that he enjoyed seeing the teachers’ and students’ work that was displayed in the exhibition during the launch event. “Teachers are nowadays required to be creative and I see great creativity coming from teachers in this exhibition. That creativity should be based on the curriculum so that the creativity is useful to their students,” he said. (Dkd)

Learning from Sidoarjo, Inclusive Education Award 2012 Recipient

Sidoarjo. We should learn from Sidoarjo. Sidoarjo District Government recently received an Inclusive Education Award for 2012. The award was given by the Directorate General for the Development of Special Education and Special Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) at a ceremony in Bali on 2 September 2012. The award in Education for Children with Special Needs was received by Sidoarjo because the District Government has a high level of commitment to inclusive education.

The Inclusive Education Award 2012 is an award that is given by MOEC and a USAID Program run by Helen Keller International Indonesia for those who have implemented inclusive education or education for special needs in Indonesia. After receiving the award, Sidoarjo Regent, Saiful Ilah said he was committed to improve the quality of human resources, especially with quality education and services to support children with special needs.

In Sidoarjo, children with special needs do not need to go to a special school. Certain public schools have been nominated to take in children with special needs to be included in classes with other children.

In SDN Lemahputro, for example, there are teachers of special education who handle special needs children. On average, there are between 2 and 4 special needs children in each class in the primary school. In SMPN 4 Sidoarjo, there are an average of 1-2 children with special needs in each class.

USAID PRIORITAS had the opportunity to visit those two schools. Wiwit Sri Arianti, USAID PRIORITAS Inclusion and Equity Specialist said that, the purpose of the visit was to learn about as well as to see first-hand the implementation of district policy on inclusion and its implementation in schools.

Teaching and learning activity in both schools were going well. Children with special needs are included with other children in the same class. Outside school hours, they also receive additional classes. Their skills and potential are displayed by the school. These include their art, music and computer work. It is hoped they can continue to practice their skills and be able eventually to live independently. According to SMPN 4 Sidoarjo School Principal, Drs. Muflich Hasyin, M.Pd, with the inclusion of special needs children into their classes, students are becoming more socially aware and caring compared to other students. (Dkd)
**Prioritas Pendidikan:**

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**Governor Syahrul Yasin Limpo:**

**I Entrust the USAID PRIORITAS Program to the Regents**

Makassar. The South Sulawesi Governor, Syahrul Yasin Limpo launched the USAID PRIORITAS Program on 28 November 2012 in the Mercure Hotel, Makassar. In his opening remarks, he asserted that the education program in South Sulawesi is a priority. The governor who has made education and health in South Sulawesi development focuses expressed his appreciation for the advent of the USAID PRIORITAS Program.

“South Sulawesi urgently needs new education methodologies such as those promoted by USAID to increase the quality of education” he said.

To 130 guests who attended the event and especially to Pinrang Regent, A. Aslam Patronangi; Maros Regent, Hatta Rahman, Pangkep Regent, Syamsuddin Hamid; Jeneponto Regent, Rajamilo; Wajo Regent, Andi Unru, and Bantaeng Vice Regent, Andi Asli Mustajab, governor Syahrul Yasin Lampo (SYL) said, “I entrust this USAID program to the regents so that we can together develop good education in South Sulawesi. We are all very supportive of this program.”

After he delivered his opening remark, SYL signed a cooperation agreement between South Sulawesi Provincial Government and USAID Indonesia, which was represented by Ester Manurung. The USAID PRIORITAS Program Director, Stuart Weston then signed the Term of Reference for Cooperation (KAK) with the partner district regents present, as well as the Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM) and Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin both of which were signed by the rectors of the universities, Prof. Dr. Arismanandar, M.Pd, and Prof. Dr. H. Qadir Gassing, HT, M.S.

(Ham)

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**Maintaining Standards is Not Only School's Responsibility**

Jeneponto. Since the partnership with DBE ended, Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTSN) Binamu, Jeneponto, has focused on maintaining its teacher’s motivation to keep creating and innovating together with the students. “We are accustomed to using active and contextual learning since we partnered with DBE. Our teachers and students feel more relaxed in class. We are trying to keep every teacher enthusiastic in innovating and adapting to the way students like to learn,” the school principal, Nuraeda said.

She told about many positive changes that have occurred in her school. Capacity building activity such as training for making the school budget, training in meaningful learning: designing lessons based on students’ activity, using curriculum review and competency mapping, designing work sheets that encourage students to think critically, assessing students’ work, using reflective learning with students as well as activating the MGMP have all had an impact on advancing the school.

Right until the present, Nuraeda continues to work hard to maintain her school’s progress. For teachers and staff to continue to innovate, she has built partnerships with a group of Junior Secondary School supervisors in the Provincial Education Office to help teachers in assisting and supervising learning, peer teaching, and developing the MGMP with other Junior Secondary School teachers.

She hopes that everyone, especially educators and policy makers in the districts will take real action to support the changes in school. According to Nuraeda, the task of maintaining and disseminating good school practices is not only the school’s responsibility.

(Ham)

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Prioritas Pendidikan: Edition 1/ October - December 2012 - 11
Sidoarjo – East Java. Can we learn about simple machines using ICT? The answer is: of course we can. This lesson designed by a teacher in SDN Kemantren I Tulangan, Ms. Sundari, S.Pd was divided into three parts and used a single computer. The first part consisted of brainstorming, where the teacher with the help of a laptop and an LCD projector asked students to describe simple machines.

In the next part of the lesson the students were divided into three groups; each consisted of five to six students each of which was given a different task. For example one group observed a slope and wedge, another observed levers, pedal and wheels, while the other group observed pulleys. The three groups were placed in different stations and rotated round to other stations after 45 minutes. The three stations were “Download Station”, “Discussion Station”, and “Photo Station”.

Download Station
At the download station, students were provided with a laptop that had an internet connection and was linked to a printer. Here, students found relevant information on simple machines. Students were able to find pictures and articles. The results were printed on paper and then displayed as their work.

Photo Station
At the photo station, taking turns in using a camera, one of the students was shown by the teacher how to use the camera. Then, the student who had been taught to use the camera became the tutor for the other students in the group in taking pictures of the simple machines they were observing. The simple machines were from the Learning Resource Center (PSBG) that had been prepared beforehand by the teacher; but objects from the school environment could be used just as well.

Discussion Station
Different from the other stations that used ICT, the Discussion Station was conventional. It facilitated students to draw and express their ideas from books and other sources and as a result of their group discussions. The equipment they needed to support their work was available including coloring markers and rulers.

At the end of the activity, students were asked to mount all their work from each of the stations on plain paper based on the design they made at the Discussion Station. After that, the teacher asked a representative from each of the group to present their work.

Presentation Station
After the presentation session was over, there was one last session, evaluating the students’ comprehension of simple machines. When each group had completed the work sheet, representatives from the group nominated two representatives to go to the computer corner to input photos they had taken during the activities. For this they used concept mapping “Inspiration” software.

With the help of this software, students classified the parts of simple machines. They did this in their groups; however they then made it into one chart. After inputting the date to the Inspiration software, the students made an evaluation with the help of LCD projector and laptop operated by one of the students from each group, where the group representatives presented the parts of the machines.

The teacher gave a final short evaluation of the lesson and the “simple machine” activity was finished. Besides using ICT, students also experienced various learning methods, including observing their environment, using the internet, and finding information from books. “The students were able to develop their thinking through discussion and peer-teaching. As a result, the students were enthusiastic and the learning was interesting and easy to understand,” said Ms. Sundari.
Magic Box
Facilitating Learning Mathematics

Banda Aceh – Aceh. “What is that?” we asked the students. They answered all together “A Magic Number Box!” This magic box is popular with early grade students in the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. The box is an innovative learning aid made by the teacher for the mathematics class.

Why has she made it like a box and a drawer? Ms. Sofiana, the teacher who designed the learning aid, explained that it will help students learn if they practice using familiar objects.

“The learning aid is in the shape of a drawer. Drawers are familiar objects often seen and used by children and we use these brass colored balls to appeal to the children,” explained Ms. Sofiana.

The brass box or magic box has some functions specially designed for early grade classes. First, it serves to introduce students to the numbers from 1 to 100, for example taking one of brass balls choosing a card (also in the box) with a number 1 on it.

Second, for comparison: more, less, or the same. This can be done using the brass balls, such as arranging seven brass balls to show that they are more than three brass balls and so on.

Third, the learning aid is useful to introduce addition and subtraction, as an example is to take four brass balls and add another four then add up all the balls and then look for a number card inside the magic box to match the answer.

For Early Grade Classes
Using 100 brass balls also has its purpose. According to Ms. Sofiana, she used 100 brass balls and 100 numbers so that it can be used in all the early grade classes. “If we only have 50 brass balls and 50 numbers, students in 2nd grade will not be able to use the box,” explained Ms. Sofiana. Using 100 brass balls indeed makes the Magic Box more useful.

What is the students’ response? All of the students are keen to get their hands on it and keen to use it. However it is unfortunate that at the moment the madrasah has only one of them, “Sometimes the students argue about who can use it to play with numbers,” complained Kautsari one of the MIN Rukoh students.

Easy to Use
It is clear that this learning aid, besides being simple and easy to use, can show early grade students’ comprehension of addition and subtraction and comparison between numbers of objects and it is easily understood by the students.

It is not a surprise that the madrasah that has been a USAID DBE partner school since 2006 received a 3rd place national award and a mark of appreciation from the Directorate General of Islamic Education of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for learning innovation. The Magic Box can improve understanding of early grade mathematics in an active, creative, innovative and fun way. (Tmk)
 Creating a Text Using MS Word, Learning is More Effective and Fun

Karawang – West Java. The lesson began by showing a video of Cleopatra Stratan, a Sundanese parody. Students in MTs Al-Ahliyah at that time were learning Bahasa Sunda (the Sundanese local language). They were in the ICT Lab which is very comfortable, working at learning Bahasa Sunda while using ICT. They looked happy, enjoying the lesson in a relaxed manner.

After watching the video for seven minutes, then they tried to retell the information from the video, including recounting the song lyrics they had heard.

Then they started to have a discussion (called paguneman in Sundanese) about what they had seen and heard. After that two students went in front of the class computer using MS Word. After that, they tried to retell the information they have received in Sundanese.

The lesson was more fun and also stimulated students to a high level of thinking, and encouraged the students to express concepts in their own words. Then they completed a worksheet given by the teacher. The steps of the lesson can be seen in box below.

(Ddn)

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**LAMBAR PANCEN BASA SUNDA**

**KO. 7.2.6 Paguneman jeung batur sakelas**

1. Tinggal jeung titekan tayangan video Cleopatra Stratan plesetan versi sunda!
2. Cartakeun naon eusina/pasualan anu aya dina tayangan tadi, pagunemkeun jeung batur sakelas pasangan!
3. Jieun teks paguneman jeung batur sabangku anu jeujeur pasualanana tiasa milih tina

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>Learning Steps</th>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students observe the video</td>
<td>Word, Excel, Powerpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Students retell to a partner what they have observed in the video including the song lyrics</td>
<td>Powerpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Students are given work sheets on “texn nynon paguneman anu jejeur puasa lanana nhith Ting 3 wancana dina tilu gambark atak warne 1. Beureum; Cikarakc nggeng batu, 2. Bu; buduk teleng 3. Hejo; Maen balj anu dampekkeun d powerpoint”.</td>
<td>Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Students discuss and work on their work sheet with a partner (Pancen)</td>
<td>Powerpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Students create text based on a discussion, writing it together with a partner</td>
<td>Powerpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Students look for information on examples of Sundanese paguneman from the internet as comparison</td>
<td>Powerpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Students review each other’s work through the computer, each with their partner</td>
<td>Powerpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Students present the results of their discussions and editing</td>
<td>Powerpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Students retell the lesson and their work is kept on the computer or a flash disk, and their work is printed and put in their portfolio</td>
<td>Powerpoint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Using a “JAELANGKUNG” to Study Gradients

Purworejo – Central Java.
The lesson with a “Jaelangkung”, a traditional doll was done using a cross shaped wood or bamboo stick with a coconut shell as the Jaelangkung’s head. The wooden cross was used as a coordinate plane, the Y axis was the head while the X axis was where the Jaelangkung’s clothes are. The lesson started by preparing the Jaelangkung, then the teacher and students found a pleasant spot in the schoolyard under the shade of a tree. When they were sitting comfortably, the teacher told a brief story about the Jaelangkung to attract the students’ attention. The teacher explained the relevance of the Jaelangkung to mathematics and the basic competences that were being taught, which was calculating the gradient of a graph.

After the students understood the objectives of the lesson, the teacher divided the students into groups, asking the groups to discuss the gradient and record the results of the discussion on a work sheet using small stick shapes like the Jaelangkung. Each group made a problem about gradients, then gave it to another group for them to solve. After that each group presented their work. The teacher and students discussed their conclusions and the results of their work. After they had finished, the teacher gave a prize to the groups who had successfully answered their problems, based on the level of accuracy in solving the problem.

In evaluating the lesson, it was clear that using the Jaelangkung had increased the students’ level of understanding about gradients. They were also able to understand it using other media. Their marks averaged 80%. Students also understood the value and character of a local culture. They liked the Jaelangkung and the games associated with it.
Teachers use Charity to Tackle Transportation Issue for Students

Soppeng – South Sulawesi. “Let’s go! Who hasn’t got into the car?” asked Amir, counting the students sitting in his van. He then took them to their homes. Amir together with eight other owner/drivers of vans is on duty to pick up and drive 250 students from the Madrasah Tsanawiyah in Soppeng District to their homes every day. “We have a list of their names. So we don’t simply transport them, we note whether they go to school or not. That is what the school has asked us to do,” he said.

The school is committed to serving its students, which it also teaches uses active learning, and has been implementing the transportation service for students since 2009. “We are serving the students. Not only serving their way of learning, but also their other needs,” said Drs. Alimin, the school principal of the DBE partner school. He saw that the students needed transportation. Many live far from the school and transportation is limited. As a result they used to come to school late. The principal who is known to be disciplined was committed to finding a solution. How? He answered humbly, “We started by performing our religious duties and praying”.

Alimin together with some teachers agreed to collect professional zakat (Islamic charity from those who work), and other charity funds to pay the expense of the students’ transportation. “Actually it is not right if it is called professional zakat because none of the teachers’ income here, except mine, meets the minimum requirement for professional zakat based on the zakat rules. However, the amount of money that has been gathered is Rp. 4,000,000 per month and is intended as charity so it is not categorized as professional zakat,” he explained.

To pay the expense of renting 9 vans is Rp. 7,200,000 per month and the rent per car is Rp. 800,000. They also receive help from some of the students’ parents who pay their own car rent for their children, in addition to charity from the teachers. “Alhamdulillah our determination to share and help is supported by the students’ parents,” he added.

This student transportation service, according to Alimin, has helped to create a pleasant and harmonious situation that supports the students’ learning at school. They have become more disciplined in studying at school, their attendance rate has also improved. Students no longer arrive late at school and they love their classes and have respect towards their teachers.

The teachers have become closer to and more caring for their students. They have also become more unified and cooperative. They help each other in working to develop students’ work sheets. As a result, there are no empty classes and no children playing truant. Through the student transportation service, the relationship between teachers and students’ parents is better and closer because every homeroom teacher give their cell phone number to their students’ parents. This is in order to enable them to share information about the students.

Another impact has manifested itself in the increased sense of trust shown by students’ parents towards school. They willingly support the school’s program. This has motivated teachers and students at the school to carry out their duties and rights, teaching and learning with their hearts. “We are certain that learning on the basis of a sincere heart will be successful. As Imam Syafii said ‘the key to success in learning is that both teachers and students are willing to teach and learn respectively’.”

“This program, I learnt that the school community must be built with empathy between teachers, students, and parents. Therefore we are learning with our hearts. This empathy helps us avoid anger, conflict and fights,” said Alimin.

Drs. Alimin
MTS Neg. Takalala
School Principal

“The school community is built on empathy between teachers, students, and parents. Therefore we are learning with our hearts. This empathy helps us avoid anger, conflict and fights.”

Alimin
PRIORITAS - Good Practice

Keeping up Good Practices should be a Tradition

Palopo – South Sulawesi. It has been a year since the DBE program finished, leaving many memories, valuable experiences, and enlightening knowledge in SMPN 2 Palopo, South Sulawesi. Training in meaningful learning motivated us to do innovative learning. Students enjoyed having the opportunity to explore their ability and potential. We have changed the role of the teacher in class to facilitating the growth of the students’ potential. The students befriend us (teachers) like their own friend; they often share their personal stories about school and their families. We enjoy that sense of intimacy. Ms. Ros Hana, a science teacher at SMPN 2 Palopo explained this to us and hopes that this situation can be maintained.

They also told us stories about a few problems they faced after the DBE program ended. For them, the problems became a challenge, they are: (1) Maintaining the results and good practices which should be everyone’s concern at school. This requires commitment and support from everyone including the district education office, (2) Policies to continue and disseminate results and good practices should be included in the school plan so that good practices can be adopted by more teachers.

“I choose to innovate in learning and at the teacher working group (MGMP) That is the responsibility of my profession. I expect strong support from all parties to maintain innovative learning at school,” Ms. Ros said.

(Pam)

Supporting Students' Learning

Soppoeng – South Sulawesi. Teachers who do not practice innovative learning are clearly out of date. Learning with an over-active or egocentric teacher or one who just gives lectures will impair the students’ potential and intelligence. Teachers have to adapt to new developments. Howard Gardner’s study on the variety of intelligences is important and should be taken notice of. Teachers must identify their students’ potential and intelligence, because each student has their own level and kind of intelligence. We see that they are variously smart in Math, music, language, visual spatial, interpersonal and other intelligences. That was explained by Alimin, School Principal in MTsN Takalala.

He is certain that student’s potential and intelligence can grow and develop if there is support for innovative learning by teachers. “Actually students are not stupid, but we teachers have not supported their learning style,” he said. For their potential to grow, he realizes that active and contextual learning are the right choice of methods. Therefore, he and his teachers are committed to implementing active learning that supports the students’ learning styles. That program should be developed and disseminated through USAID PRIORITAS. (Ham)
Strategy for Improving Education Quality

By Sopar Siburian, SH, MH

The spirit of education is learning. Improving the quality of education without considering the spirit, it is impossible to achieve.

On 15 September 2011, I was invited to a Decentralized Basic Education (DBE) program to take part in a visit to Purworejo District, Central Java. I had the opportunity to visit SMPN 19 Purworejo.

At first, I was doubtful because the school was very far from the city (about 20 km). After I visited the classes, I saw a classroom environment that I had never seen before. I saw very active learning. Students were learning in groups and discussing to solve problems. The results of their discussions were presented in front of their class. The classes were taught based on the context of their social environment. The teacher’s methods varied (not only lectures). Many learning media had been made by the teacher and students, media that were inexpensive. They made the students become more motivated and helped them enjoy learning.

According to the school principal, learning methods have changed from classical learning (mainly lecturing) to contextual teaching and learning (CLT) since the implementation of the DBE program in SMPN 19 Purworejo. The DBE program received support from everyone, especially from the District Education Office, Education Board, and even the Regent. The program has really been able to increase the students’ learning achievement at the school.

What can we see from SMPN 19 Purworejo is the answer to my previous concerns. My concerns began when I visited schools in my district. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY)’s criticism did not apply to SMPN 19. The learning methods developed by DBE are an answer to SBY’s criticism.

SBY’s Criticism

SBY expressed severe criticism of our education system. “I criticize our education methods,” said SBY in remarks to a National Summit at the Bidakara Hotel, Jakarta on 29 October 2009.

“Take a look. In kindergartens, primary schools, junior and senior secondary schools, the teachers are active, while the students are passive,” he continued. “Students are not able to think creatively and develop their thinking. If we only worry about marks on their reports, then our children will not grow creative,” SBY added. SBY said students should be encouraged to solve problems, so that their reasoning skills will improve (detiknews, 29/10/2009).

We should form Education Quality Development Teams in each region charged with improving the quality of schools.

Strategy

First, education stakeholders must be committed to improving education quality. This commitment must be realized through real programmatic actions. District Education Offices should not be passive but should create realistic programs that improve education quality. We should form Education Quality Development Teams in each region charged with improving the quality of schools.

Second, we need to implement contextual teaching and learning (CTL) for Junior Secondary Schools and Active, Effective and Enjoyable Learning (PAKEM) for Primary Schools. This can be done through capacity building for teachers, school principals and supervisors through training, mentoring and monitoring. Training is not enough! To ensure the application of what has been learnt in training, there should be mentoring and monitoring for teachers and school principals.

Third, School Based Management (MBS) should be developed that includes participative and transparent school management, improves the school committee’s role and builds a partnership with the community.

Fourth, implementation should be done gradually, starting with a small number of schools. After it is successful in these schools, it can be implemented in other schools.

Fifth, education exhibitions should take place at least once a year in each district. Education exhibitions are events for schools and the government education offices to show their successes in managing and implementing education to the public.

Sixth, at the education pre-service level, Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) should be systematically improved in order to create new educators so that their graduates are ready to teach and have good teaching skills.

I am sure that if these six steps are carried out seriously and consistently, SBY’s criticism of our education can be quickly answered. This will result in progress in Indonesia. As Stan Shih said, “The effective growth of brain power in a country will determine the country’s welfare in the future”.

SOPAR SIBURIAN, SH, MH
MH is a member of the Provincial Parliament North Sumatra. When he wrote this piece he was working on Commission E (for Education). The article was first published in Harian Waspada, Medan (11/10/2012). It was reproduced with the writer’s consent.
PRIORITAS - Idea

Secondary School Teachers Working Group Empowerment
By Mulyana Surya Atmaja

WE gained many new experiences from DBE training activities. To maximize its impact, we activated the school level Teachers Working Groups (MGMP). We did this for all subjects and involved all our teachers. The implementation of working group activities took place in a relaxed and familiar atmosphere. Teachers worked in groups based on their subjects, in which at least one of the teachers had already been trained by DBE.

Planning and simulation were done gradually. Every teacher was given the opportunity to see for him/herself the application in the field and give feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of what they saw and give advice on additional activities that should be done. In this activity, teachers did not feel awkward or uncomfortable that their work was being “observed” by their peers who wanted to learn from them.

Teachers who had not received any training got the same experience as those who had already participated in training. The school MGMP based on the subject groups proved to be effective. This activity created a good learning community among the teachers. If team teaching is needed, then teachers can complement and enrich each other so that children’s knowledge becomes more comprehensive and broad because it involves more inputs.

Reflective activity that focuses on determining what has been successful and what should be improved, is a scientific means to do self-criticism and to get solution to problems from our peers. Working in that way, no one feels offended or judged. They feel they are involved in a scientific consultation discussing important issues.

Observation of teaching practice broadens our experience, showing that there are ways for teachers to explore and develop student’s ability optimally without “bothering” the teacher. Teacher-centered activity should be limited as much as possible to give students more chance to explore by themselves. There are many inexpensive materials that can be used as learning aids by students, such as used materials which make learning meaningful and support the learning objectives and are useful to improve the students’ learning experiences.

We are trying to accept our shortcomings and not underestimate the students. We are trying to give them real learning experiences. Teachers should not always give “inputs” such as “supplying” students with answers to problems. We feel that we should facilitate students to find their own understanding of concepts, which will be better and more meaningful. Students’ abilities will improve in terms of their social skills, including appreciating other people’s opinions and having good manners in their speech and actions. Students will also be able to collaborate better in solving problems.

Three main concepts underlined by the MGMP are the classroom arrangement, displays of students’ work and variation in the learning environment. Teachers are expected to be well prepared and consider many factors that should support the learning processes and will involve students fully both physically and emotionally. At first it will be a difficult. However, that ‘sweat’ will be paid back with the quality of learning processes that are able to bring understanding to students which is meaningful. Students will feel happy and their curiosity will be satisfied.

Students’ independence can be developed through cooperative learning which makes teachers’ day-to-day tasks easier. Students’ dependency on their teachers can gradually decrease, because students prefer and enjoy sharing with their experiences with their friends and using learning resources from their environment. Their independence can be seen from the students’ ability to learn well even when the teacher is not in the room. What is more important is that our ability as education practitioners is to change, improve ourselves and not be easily satisfied with what we have achieved. As taught by DBE, our professional ability is best developed through the School MGMP.

In this activity, teachers will not feel awkward or uncomfortable that their work is being “observed” by their peers who want to learn from them.

Mulyana Surya Atmaja is the the Head of the Science MGMP in Karawang District, West Java

Teachers observing a model teacher during the school level MGMP in SMPN 2 Rawamerta, Karawang.
USAID PRIORITAS is a five year program funded by USAID, implemented by Research Triangle Institute (RTI), the Education Development Center (EDC), and World Education. USAID PRIORITAS is designed to increase access to quality basic education in Indonesia, especially in order to: (1) Improve the quality and relevance of teaching and learning in schools; (2) Develop better management and governance in schools and districts; (3) Support better coordination within and between schools, teaching training institutions and government in all levels. The content of this newsletter does not necessarily represent the official views of USAID or US Government.

USAID PRIORITAS is working with 69 partner districts in Aceh, North Sumatra, Banten, West Java, Central Java, East Java, and South Sulawesi provinces. In the second year, partner provinces will be extended to include Papua and, in the third year, East Nusa Tenggara and West Nusa Tenggara.