2,564 Facilitators Trained on Good practices in Learning and School Management

Solo-Medan. Dissemination of good practices in education through training has started. USAID PRIORITAS trained 274 provincial facilitators consisting of selected school teachers, principals, supervisors, and lecturers who will later train local facilitators and assist schools in implementing good practices in learning and school management. The training was divided into two groups, primary school training (SD/MI) – held in Solo from 14 to 20 January 2013 and junior secondary school training (SMP/MTs) - held in Medan from 30 January to 5 February 2013. These newly trained facilitators were prepared to train approximately 2,290 local facilitators in seven partner provinces. In total, there are 2,564 facilitators ready to train and mentor schools in the USAID PRIORITAS partner provinces.

Didik Prangbakat, M.Pd attending the event in Solo on behalf of the Director of Primary School Development recognized the facilitators’ potential. He believed that, after the training, they would be role models for other teachers to look up to. Dr. Juandanilsyah, on behalf of the Director of Junior Secondary School Development, stated that in the future teachers would face many challenges. He hoped these facilitators would serve as drivers and motivators who would encourage other teachers to teach better. Read the complete article on page 3.

Visit: www.prioritaspendidikan.org

Developing EGRA-based Program

AN Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) held in November – December 2012 resulted in data on SD/MI students’ reading skills in USAID PRIORITAS partner districts. USAID PRIORITAS will develop programs to assist school children to improve their reading skills based on the findings of the assessment. Read the complete article on page 2.
Findings from Early Grade Reading Assessment in Seven Provinces: Fluent in Reading Words but Difficulties in Comprehension

Jakarta – An Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) on 4,232 third-grade students in primary schools in 23 districts in the seven USAID PRIORITAS partner provinces indicates that these students are fluent in naming letters and in reading words but have greater difficulty with reading text and in understanding what they read.

Lorna Power, USAID PRIORITAS Program Deputy Director who led the EGRA program said that these findings showed that the students’ basic reading skills are satisfactory. “They can read words in Indonesian, but they cannot always understand what they read,” explained Lorna. “It’s quite often that they don’t understand the meaning of the content,” she added.

The children assessed could identify, on average, 85.69 letters per minute, and read 70.42 meaningful words per minute. However, only approximately 47.2% students could read with 80% comprehension. See the table below.

EGRA is an internationally recognized assessment tool and has been used in many countries all over the world. The results are used to understand children’s reading skills and to analyze the reading skill set that needs to be developed. The Indonesian version of EGRA consists of six tasks that measure early grade students (third grade students) reading skills, i.e. (1) naming letters, (2) differentiating initial letter sounds, (3) reading familiar words, (4) reading non-meaningful words, (5) oral reading fluency and comprehension, and (6) listening comprehension. Each assessment requires approximately 15 minutes.

EGRA findings showed that most third grade students only understand 50% of what they heard, and only half of them understand what they read.

“Improving the children’s reading skills will help to improve their ability to learn across all subjects in the curriculum, this is the challenge,” Lorna said. (Anw)

**Table:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Naming</th>
<th>Initial Sounds</th>
<th>Familiar Words</th>
<th>Non Words</th>
<th>Oral Reading Fluency</th>
<th>Reading Comprehension</th>
<th>Listening Comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>85.69</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>70.42</td>
<td>35.57</td>
<td>68.09</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Not Enough</td>
<td>Not Enough</td>
<td>Not Enough</td>
<td>Not Enough</td>
<td>Not Enough</td>
<td>Not Enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
<td>8.01%</td>
<td>1.85%</td>
<td>3.69%</td>
<td>1.34%</td>
<td>3.31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relevant to TTI’s

**EDUCATION** professionals recognize the potential of EGRA. Prof. Dr. Asfah Rahman, a Makassar State University (UNM) lecturer, said that EGRA was the key to improving the quality of teacher and lecturer training programs. “We can develop EGRA-based training materials. We can align the materials with the challenges faced by teachers when teaching reading skills. They can also be used in the classroom and in teacher training programs,” he said.

Ririk Ratnasari, a staff at Language Teacher and Teaching Staff Development and Empowerment Center (Pusat Pengembangan dan Pemberdayaan Pendidik dan Tenaga Kependidikan Bahasa - P4TK Bahasa) at the Ministry of Education and Culture shared similar views. “EGRA findings can help us design early grade teacher training programs so that we can train teachers to improve the way they teach,” she stated. (Anw)

USAID Helps 100 Million Children Read Fluently

USAID PRIORITAS will use the EGRA findings to design comprehensive programs to improve children’s reading skills. “This will help USAID reach its global target: to improve the reading skills of 100 million children all over the world. EGRA is the key element that will help us reach this target,” said Jalu Cahyanto, USAID Indonesia Program Manager.

Dr. Unifah Rosyidi, Head of Educator Professional Development Center - BP SDM PMP Kemdikbud, welcomed the EGRA initiative in Indonesia. During a presentation on the EGRA findings in Jakarta last February, she declared that the program is extremely valuable in supporting the improvement of the quality of children’s education in Indonesia.

“Many studies only scratch the surface; EGRA, however, identifies the root cause – the real problem in the field. We support the collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Culture and USAID to expand the coverage of EGRA implementation in Indonesia,” she said. She hoped the teacher’s teaching skills could also be assessed, not just the student’s reading skills; so the significance of the two variables could be measured and compared. (Anw)
Spreading Good practices through Training

USAID PRIORITAS is conducting training in teaching and learning and school management good practices in seven partner provinces. The training held from January to August 2013 uses training materials that have been proven to be effective in improving schools.

To clearly illustrate the improvement, videos showing success stories are played in several sessions, such as videos on the implementation of active, creative, effective, and joyful learning (Pembelajaran Aktif, Kreatif, Efektif dan Menyenangkan - PAKEM); contextual learning; school strategies to encourage community participation in education at school level; and some inspirational videos.

To boost the participants’ understanding and confidence, good practitioners are invited to participate as resource persons. They present their success stories in facilitating active learning and implementing school-based management. The participants are also given an opportunity for dialogue and to note key elements that they can apply in their own schools.

After receiving the training materials on teaching and learning, all the participants are asked to develop a lesson plan to be implemented in their teaching practice at school. They are required to make sure that all the things they learned during the training are applied in the teaching practice.

Prof. Dr. H. Patta Bundu, M.Ed, a lecturer at Makassar State University said that the training was inspirational and beneficial for him. “This training can accelerate the improvement of the quality of learning in schools,” said the lecturer who participated in last January’s training in Solo. (Anw)

2013 Curriculum Graduate Competency Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADUATE COMPETENCY STANDARDS (SKL) - BRIEF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DOMAIN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ATTITUDE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEVOITED: GOOD NATURED, CONFIDENT AND RELIABLE INDIVIDUALS WHO INTERACT EFFECTIVELY WITH NATURE, THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT, THE WORLD AND CIVILIZATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe + Question + Try + Process + Present + Reason + Create</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SKILL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know + Understand + Implement + Analyze + Evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KNOWLEDGE</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DURING** the training that involved 2,564 facilitators, USAID PRIORITAS trained the participants in the context of the 2013 Curriculum. The participants were trained in implementing the 2013 Curriculum competency standards (Standar Kompetensi Lulusan - SKL) in making their lesson plans for practical teaching.

“We guide the participants to make sure that every aspect of the new curriculum – attitude, skills, and knowledge – is included in their lesson plans and applied in their teaching practice. The participants use the content and standards of the current curriculum and integrate them with the 2013 Curriculum,” said Ujang Sukandi, USAID PRIORITAS Teacher Training Specialist.

This pattern of training will be continued in the school-level training sessions. The participants in provincial training of trainers will be the facilitators who will also deliver training to schools in the context of the 2013 Curriculum. “When the new curriculum is implemented, the teachers in our partner schools should be ready. They will be familiar with the 2013 Curriculum-based learning processes and its standards: balancing competencies between attitudes, skills, and knowledge.” (Anw)

What Topics are Trained?

**Primary Schools (SD/MI)**

**Teaching and Learning:**

- Active, Creative, Effective, and Enjoyable Learning (Pembelajaran Aktif, Kreatif, Efektif dan Menyenangkan - PAKEM)
- Creating an Effective Learning Environment
- Lesson Planning and Practical Teaching
- Empowering Teacher Working Group (Kelompok Kerja Guru - KKG)
- Planning a Follow-up Strategy for Implementation of PAKEM

**School Management:**

- School Management (Multi-party Empowerment to Improve Learning Quality, Transparency and Accountability)
- Community Participation (Benefit, Kinds, and How to Encourage it)
- School Planning and Budgeting
- Planning a Follow-up Strategy for School Management

Training Materials and Video can be downloaded from www.prioritaspendidikan.org.
Cimahi Draws up a Strategic Plan Focused on Improving Learning Quality

Developing a Teacher Management and Deployment Program

**EQUITABLE** distribution of teachers has been a key issue in Indonesia. While many schools in some areas experience a surplus in their teaching staff, in other areas many schools do not have enough teachers. This disparity causes cost inefficiencies. It often happens that the BOS (School Operational Assistance) is used to pay for teacher and teaching staff salaries rather than school operations or learning needs. The government issued a decree of five ministers on 3 October 2011 to rationalize teacher distribution nationwide.

To support the government’s policy, USAID PRIORITAS is developing a Capacity Building Development Program in Teacher Management and Deployment that will be implemented in 60 partner districts. “We will assist the districts to conduct a teacher needs analysis, and the findings will be used to formulate teacher management and deployment policies in the districts. If teachers are distributed evenly according to the needs, it can improve the quality of education by ensuring schools have enough teachers. Also, the government’s operational grants (BOS) can be utilized for the improvement of education quality,” explained Dr. Mark Heyward, USAID PRIORITAS Education Governance and Management Adviser.

Blightar district in East Java will be the focus of pilot activities for the USAID PRIORITAS teacher management and deployment training module. Various government agencies and groups of personnel including the Education Offices, District Personnel Agency (Badan Kepegawaian Daerah - BKD), District Development Planning Board (Bappeda), Ministry of Religious Affairs, school supervisors, and school management will be involved in the activities. The outcome of this program will be a teacher deployment map and new district policies on teacher management and deployment. “USAID PRIORITAS will facilitate and guide districts that are committed to promoting needs based teacher deployment,” said Dr. Heyward.

The USAID PRIORITAS Capacity Building Development Program in Teacher Management and Deployment was highly appreciated by the Basic Education Teacher and Teaching Staff Development Director of MOEC (Pembinaan Pendidikan dan Tenaga Kependidikan Dasar - P2TK) Dr. Sumarna Surapranata. In a meeting at his office on 27 March, he said he hoped USAID PRIORITAS could provide solutions for managing and deploying teachers in districts. “Our experts are ready to team up and provide access to the main education database (data pokok pendidikan - Dapodik) for USAID PRIORITAS,” added Dr. Sumarna after being briefed on the USAID PRIORITAS program. (Anw)

Appropriate teacher allocation can help schools improve learning quality

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Cimahi Draws up a Strategic Plan Focused on Improving Learning Quality

By Sri Rusniyati, Program Sub-division Head, Education Office - Cimahi

The city of Cimahi became a pilot project for USAID PRIORITAS as part of a mentoring program for education strategic planning. From the mentoring we learned that analysis of strategic issues based on data and information is the key point in determining education policy for strategic programs and activities in the 2013-2017 period. There are three focuses to this strategic plan:

1. Data and Information
   Determining targets, strategies, and policies must be based on the city’s data and information on education. This helps identify specific targets groups of schools such as under-performing schools, those with students with special needs (physical disabilities, special economic needs, remote etc.), those with teacher staffing excesses and shortages, etc.

   Data and information analyzed through the education information system developed by USAID PRIORITAS provides support in determining effective and efficient education development programs.

2. Learning Quality
   The vision of Cimahi Education Office, to develop quality education and create a well educated and competitive community, has set the focus of the city development policy, which is quality improvement. In the quality analysis, targets focused on were as follows: student per class ratios, student-teacher ratios, average exam scores, number of student repeating classes, which are all factors that impact the learning processes. They have been the primary focus in strategic planning to improve the quality of education in Cimahi.

3. Teacher Quality and Distribution
   Teacher and learning are like two sides of a coin. Teacher and student allocation are a key factor in the success of schools and students. 2012 data analyzed using the USAID PRIORITAS Education Management Information System showed many schools in Cimahi where the average number of students per class was above 32 while the class teacher-student per class ratio was below 1, which demonstrated that the schools need more teachers.

   On the other hand, there are schools in which the average number of students per class is below 32 and the number of teacher is more than the schools need. The discrepancies in teacher distribution is a challenge in managing the education system, where the aim is to remove these discrepancies between schools.

   This issue has become a strategic issue for the Education Office and will be dealt with through a new teacher deployment policy and limits on new student intakes to improve learning quality in class. Thank you USAID PRIORITAS.
Cimahi Draws up a Strategic Plan Focused on Improving Learning Quality

such as under-performing schools, those identify specific targets groups of schools policies must be based on the city's data activities in the 2013-2017 period. There policy for strategic programs and the key point in determining education issues based on data and information is strategic planning. From the mentoring a mentoring program for education project for USAID PRIORITAS as part of Management Adviser.

improvement of education quality,” explained Dr. Mark government’s operational grants (BOS) can be utilized for the evenly according to the needs, it can improve the quality of will be used to formulate teacher management and

Education and Culture Sub-division Head, Education Blitar district in East Java will be the focus of pilot activities To support the government’s policy, USAID PRIORITAS is

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Schools are in the process of changing the distribution of

USAID PRIORITAS Teaching and Learning Adviser Lynne Hill handed the Partnership Terms of Reference (Kerangka Acuan Kerjasama - KAK) to Unimed Rector, Prof. Dr. Ibnu Hajar Damanik, MS and IAIN SU Rector Prof. Dr. Nur Fadhill Lubis, MA witnessed by the US Consul for Sumatra Kathryn A. Crockart and USAID PRIORITAS North Sumatera Provincial Coordinator Agus Marwan.

Develop Strategic Partnership with TTIs

AT the center of the USAID PRIORITAS strategy in running its programs is the partnership with TTIs (Teacher Teaching Institutes). TTI Introductory Meetings that were held in the seven partner provinces in February and March highlighted the partnership between USAID PRIORITAS and the TTIs to improve the quality of pre-service and serving teachers.

In a TTI Introductory Meeting at the Grand Angkasa International Hotel in Medan (8/3), the two largest TTIs in North Sumatra, Medan State University (Unimed) and the State Islamic Institute for North Sumatra (IAIN SU), claimed that the partnership would help improve education services in North Sumatera to make them world-class.

Prof. Dr. Nur Fadhill Lubis, MA, the IAIN SU Rector, supports this partnership enthusiastically. He believes that USAID PRIORITAS as the extension of the USAID DBE (Decentralized Basic Education) program will be able to improve the quality of basic education. “I was involved in DBE programs, which brought many benefits and a positive impact,” said Prof. Dr. Nur Fadhill Lubis, MA.

Prof. Dr. Nur Fadhill Lubis, MA who is also the Chair of the North Sumatra Education Board and a graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) said that training and mentoring conducted by the USAID DBE program was the solution to teachers’ needs.

Teachers and schools trained by DBE have become more creative and innovative. “Teachers who are not trained by DBE are jealous. That’s why this program’s coverage must be wider so that other teachers can also receive the benefits,” he added.

Unimed Rector Prof. Dr. Ibnu Hajar Damanik, MS said that the partnership with USAID PRIORITAS was a strategic partnership. Through this partnership, Unimed lecturers could benefit from the programs and improve their skills as professional teaching staff. He was optimistic that USAID PRIORITAS programs will change the culture of

institutions from teacher-centered to student-centered.

Supported by the US Consul General

The United States of America Consul General for Sumatra, Kathryn A. Crockart fully supports the partnership of USAID PRIORITAS and the TTIs. Kathryn said that the US government is committed to assisting the Indonesian government improve access to quality basic education services. “This commitment is a part of a comprehensive partnership signed by President Barack Obama and President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono,” she added.

(Eh/Anw)

What is the Partnership with the TTIs about?

THE key objective of USAID PRIORITAS partnership with TTI is to improve the quality and relevance of education in schools through training pre-service and in-service training for teachers. TTIs will be involved in the improvement of their courses and classroom practice. They will also take part in teacher training and mentoring programs, particularly in programs to improve learning and school management in partner schools. Moreover, the partnership is intended to assist districts in improving the quality of education governance and management. These programs are working within the existing government systems to give wider impact.

Activities conducted in the program include: (1) Improving practical teaching programs for pre-service and in-service teachers; (2) Providing practical training for lecturers in good education practices; (3) Involving lecturers in training at district and school levels; (4) Training selected TTI lab schools and partner schools; (5) Assisting TTIs in curriculum development/revision for pre-service and in-service teacher education; (6) Supporting the development of TTIs as service providers for teacher in-service training programs; and (7) Conducting classroom action research together with teachers.

Good practices activities during this partnership will be disseminated through TTI consortia in partner provinces. The program is designed especially to raise the quality of early grade reading, math and science.

(Anw)
USAID PRIORITAS in November and December 2012 conducted a baseline assessment on 184 primary schools (SD/MI) students and more than 138 secondary schools (SMP/MTs) in seven partner provinces. The assessment’s objective was to obtain preliminary data on student performance in Indonesian language, mathematics, and science. Below is a brief summary of the results.

Importance of Problem Solving and Creativity

In primary schools (SD/MI), Indonesian language and math tests were conducted with fourth grade students while a science test was conducted with fifth grade students. Two Indonesian language tests were given: reading and writing. Some students had difficulty in comprehending the reading texts and communicating coherent ideas in writing.

In the math test, many students found it difficult to identify simple decimal values and solve decimal problems. Also, students struggled to answer problem solving questions and questions requiring creativity. In the science test, students found it easier to solve multiple choice questions compared to essay questions that required them to draw conclusions and apply concepts they previously learned.

Strengthen Concept Application

In secondary schools (SMP/MTs), all the tests were given to eighth grade students. In the Indonesian language test, most students could understand the reading texts and were able to write coherently. However, about 20% students had difficulty in the writing tests, particularly in writing sentences, the quality of ideas, spelling and punctuation. Moreover, many students’ handwriting was difficult to read.

In the math test, students had difficulty in answering questions which emphasized the understanding and application of concepts. In the science test, students were generally weak in drawing conclusions from a given data set. Furthermore, they found difficulty reading measures on a ruler, reading weighing scales and measuring a cylinder. They also found difficulty applying science concepts in daily life.

Significance of Pre-school Education

The chart shows the sample result of primary schools (SD/MI) reading tests. According to the assessment results, in nearly all tests the girls’ scores were higher than the boys’ scores. SD/MI students who had enrolled in kindergarten (TK) showed higher results than students who had not been to pre-school. It demonstrates the significance of pre-school education. The average score of conventional primary school (SD) children was higher than those in madrasah ibtidaiyah (MI), and public school students on average gained higher results than their peers in private schools.

(Student Assessment as Basis for Teacher Training)

The above findings will be a point of reference for USAID PRIORITAS in developing teacher training programs. Future teacher training programs need to focus on the following:

• Reading lessons should help students develop their comprehension through discussions on the meaning of the texts they read.

• Students should be accustomed to writing clear, meaningful and coherent reports, stories and other types of texts.

• Math should focus on concept development and application, instead of simply memorizing formulae. Problem solving approaches should be emphasized. Students should be given math problems to solve by themselves. Open-ended questions should be encouraged; for example: make as many rectangles with an area of 24 cm² as you can.

• A similar situation applies in science. Students should do more practical and observation work so that they can better understand science concepts through hands-on experience. They also need to understand the application of the concepts in daily life. Furthermore, students need to practice their science skills, including observation, data collection and analysis, as well as writing reports of their observations and experiments.

(Sw/Anw)
Building on DBE Success in Five Districts

For six years, the local government of Aceh has focused on Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar, Pidie, Bireuen, and Aceh Tengah as the beneficiaries of the USAID Decentralized Basic Education (DBE). DBE has been of significant benefit to the education sector in these five districts, particularly at the basic education level.

“We have been waiting for the continuation of the program, because DBE has given great benefits for the development of education in our district,” said Drs. H. Taufik, MM, Secretary of Aceh Tengah district, who was formerly the Head of the District Education Office when DBE was running.

In Aceh Besar district, the USAID PRIORITAS team has had the opportunity to extend the DBE program by making a presentation during the socialization of local regulation (Qanun) Number 6 Year 2010 on the Implementation and Management of Education in Aceh Besar.

The local regulation (qanun) which was initiated by DBE was warmly welcomed by most school principals, teachers and school committees. In the socialization USAID PRIORITAS presented materials on Public Participation in Education that was based on previous experiences in running the DBE program.

Meanwhile, in Bireuen district, the District Head, H. Ruslan M. Daud assured the commitment of the district to participate in USAID funded education programs. During DBE program, the local government of Bireun issued Decree Number 38 Year 2008 on the Establishment of a Program Steering Committee and a Working Group on Basic Education Quality Improvement. The Education Office and the Ministry of Religious Affairs jointly promoted the development of education and improvement of education quality in the district.

He stated that in the next five years he would concentrate on the improvement of education quality. “We will focus on human resources improvement, especially on those related to education quality improvement,” stated H. Ruslan who is being supported by USAID PRIORITAS in Bireuen.

Aceh Besar and Banda Aceh districts also declared their readiness to run USAID programs that emphasize education quality improvement. The Mayor of Banda Aceh, Mawardy Nurdin, and the Deputy District Head of Pidie, M. Iriawan attended the launch of the USAID PRIORITAS program in Jakarta.

Bardah Sahidi, a Central Aceh representative on the District Education Commission of the local parliament, who was formerly on the Budget Commission, endorsed the program and said that he planned to allocate a budget for teacher quality improvement in the district budget (APBK /APBD). “My objective is to allocate a budget for teacher training so that we share the costs with USAID PRIORITAS. We have felt the benefit of previous DBE programs,” said Bardah Sahidi.

(Tmk)

Synergy in Education Quality Improvement Program

Improvement in education quality is one of the district’s key programs as described by Rusli M. Saleh in the presentation of a USAID PRIORITAS preliminary study. “Education programs in Bener Meriah will focus on quality enhancement,” said Rusli M. Saleh who led the USAID PRIORITAS discussion on education in Bener Meriah, which was attended by a variety of stakeholders in education.

Similar to Bener Meriah, Aceh Jaya – also a USAID PRIORITAS partner district – expressed its enthusiasm about working with the program for five years. The District Head of Aceh Jaya Ir. Azhar Abdurrahman stated during the signing of Partnership Terms of Reference (KAK) between USAID PRIORITAS and the government of Aceh Jaya earlier in Banda Aceh, “We support the quality improvement program conducted by USAID PRIORITAS. Our district still needs a lot of training in quality enhancement for teachers and teaching staff.”

The area that was destroyed by tsunami eight years ago now has sufficient school buildings, constructed to good standards. Therefore, it is logical that the focus should shift to quality enhancement. To support the current focus, Aceh Jaya education stakeholders expect that USAID PRIORITAS will provide regular training for local training facilitators and especially for lead teachers in Teacher Working Groups (KKG and MGMP). (Tmk)
MTsN Peanornor Builds Science Meditation Room

Desmila Manurung is assisting her students experimenting with beams of light using simple media in the science meditation room. In this room students can use a variety of media to prove science concepts.

North Tapanuli - One of the classrooms at MTs Negeri Peanornor, North Tapanuli, North Sumatera contains a lot of science learning media. The students call it the science lab. However, Desmila Manurung, S.Pd prefers to call it a meditation room. "It's not a science lab. The students like to call it a lab because they hope to have a science lab," said Desmila Manurung.

Desmila Manurung had her reasons why she preferred the term. The alumnus of IKIP HKBP Nommensen would like her students to focus on and enjoy learning science. She has made and collected various learning media that she displays in the room. Every science lesson, her students are encouraged to use these media. "Here, I want my students to meditate and find a cure," said Desmila.

The cure Desmila referred to is hands-on practice of science concepts. As a science teacher, Desmila realizes the difficulty faced by her students when learning science. Students often fail to understand the concepts because they do not know their applications in the real world. "Here, they use media to prove the concepts they learn. Hence, they can find the link between the concepts and the real world," explained Desmila.

Desmila frequently makes use of simple and inexpensive materials to create learning media. She got seriously interested after receiving USAID-DBE BTL (Better Teaching and Learning) training. After making and collecting media, Desmila Manurung was faced with the problem of maintaining those media. A lot of media are damaged after the students use them. To overcome the problem she lists every learning aid she creates and collects. She shows the lists to her students in their first lesson. "The objective is for students to know what media have been made by her and their peers from other classes," said the mother of two.

After showing them the list she asks the students to make similar learning aids. In the process, the students themselves are learning. They understand the concepts right away. "This way students immediately learn and understand the concept, create better media, and the media are always ready to use," said Desmila. (Eh)

North Sumatra Government Confirms its Support

H. Gatot then expressed his hope that the partnership between the government and USAID PRIORITAS will be a strategic partnership. In 2011-2012 the North Sumatra Government spread USAID-DBE good practices by providing training for 1,020 teachers. The trainings were able to provide immediate benefit to 32,640 students in 33 districts in North Sumatra.

"The dissemination is intended to encourage the spread of basic education quality improvement across North Sumatra," he said. "Therefore, the North Sumatra Government endorses the USAID PRIORITAS programs in all its aspects – policy, funding, and resources – to ensure the success of USAID PRIORITAS programs in North Sumatra," he added. (Eh)
Pledge to Make a Success of Education Quality Program

_Pandeglang and Serang are committed to a partnership with USAID PRIORITAS to improve basic education quality._

_Pandeglang – Serang._
Approximately 100 representatives of USAID PRIORITAS partner schools gathered at the Education Office building to declare their commitment to success in the basic education quality improvement program (20/12).

The meeting held by the Secretary of Pandeglang Education Office, Drs. Nurhasan made a commitment to support the implementation of USAID PRIORITAS program aimed at improving basic education quality.

A day later, a similar commitment was declared in the district of Serang. Over 70 participants from partner schools, the Education Office, and the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) gathered at the hall of SMPN 1 Ciruas, Serang.

These partners were enthusiastic in supporting the USAID PRIORITAS program. They saw an opportunity to develop ideas and initiatives to improve learning quality.

As the Secretary of Pandeglang Education Office stated, “Hopefully in the future Pandeglang can become a role model for other districts and also at the provincial level and nationwide,” he said, highlighting the technical support provided by USAID PRIORITAS to improve teacher quality. Let’s hope that the program runs smoothly and benefits the true stakeholders: the students. (Nic)

Everything is Here

_CLOP_, clop, clop. Three students were marching in their uniforms into SMPN 2 Cilegon main school yard one afternoon. They were not holding a ceremony; they were rehearsing. One observing student told his friend, “We must become champions again this year.”

SMPN 2 Cilegon is the champion in many fields. In the past year (2011-2012) SMPN 2 Cilegon students have won 130 competitions at district and provincial levels – from sports to storytelling, from math to taekwondo. Thanks to no less than 25 extra-curricular activities, the school, established in 1980, has been able to achieve many successes. It does not only offer sports and arts as extra-curricular activities. it also has a science club, math club, and robotic club. Each club has its own coach and mentor.

To maintain academic achievement, each student is only allowed to join a maximum of two clubs. However, they are required to join at least one club since it is one of the passing grade indicators.

SMPN 2 Cilegon teachers believe that these clubs develop the students’ hobbies, talents and potential. The process creates independent, reliable and confident students.

As well as feeling pride and satisfaction, the high achievers also receive scholarships from the school and other institutions. (Nic)

SMPN 2 Cilegon has won 130 competitions in just one year. Many student clubs can be found here, including flag waving, aero-modeling, environment, science and math clubs.
**Great Leader Commitment**

**Bandung** – The Head of Sukabumi district, Sukmawijaya, at the launch of USAID PRIORITAS in West Java said that in July 2012 he met USAID PRIORITAS representatives who explained to him about the programs. He then understood that USAID PRIORITAS was an extension of DBE focusing on learning quality improvement, governance and management, linked to education policy. Sukmawijaya said that he immediately accepted the USAID PRIORITAS offer to continue the partnership. “We, and surely other leaders of USAID PRIORITAS partner districts feel honored because our districts have been selected to become USAID PRIORITAS partners."

He believed this program is in line with his education policy. “We – on behalf of all USAID PRIORITAS partners – are ready to fully support USAID PRIORITAS programs. We are committed to provide budgets and human resources,” he declared.

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**DBE Districts Demonstrate Program Impact**

“We see and feel the impact of DBE in our areas. The benefits are felt by students, teachers and us at the local government level,” said Agus Supriatman, Head of the District Education Office in Karawang, in his welcome remarks at the launch of USAID PRIORITAS program in West Java. Agus was representing DBE partners in delivering an evaluation and testimony of the impact of DBE programs in their areas. Below are several kinds of DBE impact in his area:

- Drawing up of an Information-based Strategic Plan and Action Plan for the Local Education Office;
- School Plans made by the schools themselves, based on their school profiles;
- Agreement on Education Unit Operational Standard Costs for primary schools (SD/MI), junior secondary schools (SMP/MTs), and senior secondary schools (SMA/MA);
- Calculation of Minimum Education Access and Service Standard Costs;
- Improvements in learning quality through contextual, cooperative, active, creative, and enjoyable learning approaches in SD/MI;
- Improvements in learning quality through meaningful learning in SMP/MTs;
- School-based distance learning;
- Establishment of Cluster Resource Centers

He also assured everyone that other partner regions felt the same benefits, probably even greater. In addition, he presented several DBE-inspired programs. Through USAID PRIORITAS, Agus hopes that DBE successes can be expanded.

(Ddn)

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**To Keep Rolling, KKG/MGMP Needs Breakthrough**

**THE** Teacher Working Groups (Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran – MGMP and Kelompok Kerja Guru - KKG) are currently busy. The Science Teacher Working Group in Cimahi, for instance, holds an activity nearly every week. The Teacher Working Group 04 (KKG Gugus 04) Sindangkasih, Ciamis, is also busy holding its weekly activities. Nonetheless, MGMP and KKG are often active only when they receive funding. At the moment, the MGMP is operating fully because it has received a block grant from the government.

That was an important issue which emerged during USAID PRIORITAS baseline monitoring interviews in Cimahi, Bandung Barat, and Ciamis. Deni Ahmad, leader of the Indonesian Language Teachers working group, and Irawati, leader of the Science Teachers working group, in Cimahi explained the problem during the interviews. Similar views were also shared by Tohir, Chair of Teachers Working Group 04 Sindangkasih, and Tatang Supriatna, the leader of the English Language Teachers working group, in Cimahi.

The MGMP in Bandung Barat, particularly Group 02 and Group 04, receive support from a Lesson Study program and a block grant so they can fully function. However, before they received the grants, they only met at the most every two months. The topics covered were only about exam questions and strategies.

**In Need of Breakthrough**

Thus, the forum expects that USAID PRIORITAS can make a real breakthrough in empowering the working group. What is meant by ‘empowerment’ covers two points: regular activities and sustainability.

Firstly, the forum needs training to develop the group’s activities. It is looking for creative and constructive activities related to teacher professional development and learning quality.

Secondly, the forum needs capacity and creativity building to make the activities sustainable.

Iwan Irawan, leader of the Science Teachers working group in Cimahi explained that MGMP administrators need support to develop their self-reliance and fund raising skills. If that happened, the forum would not need to depend only on the block grant and other financial aid. The forum must learn to function without block grants.

MGMP organizers in West Bandung said that they were in need of assistance from USAID PRIORITAS so that the forum could become sustainable.

“Through programs developed by USAID PRIORITAS, hopefully the MGMP can become sustainable,” Iwan said.
Motivating Schools

IN order to spread information about the program and build cooperation, USAID PRIORITAS conducted program socialization in all partner districts in seven provinces. The socialization involved the District Heads, Local House of Representatives, Education Offices, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Regional Development Planning Boards, Education Boards, local training facilitators and partner schools. In Central Java many leaders voiced their commitment to implement USAID PRIORITAS programs and their aim to build top-quality schools.

Greget Sragen

The District Head of Sragen district, Agus Fatchur Rahman in his welcome remarks during the socialization of USAID PRIORITAS program mentioned Sragen’s development motto which is Gerbang Sukowati or Greget Bangun Sukowati (which means ‘Develop our District’). “USAID PRIORITAS is a key element of Gerbang Sukowati. PRIORITAS is expected to drive change, improve education quality in Sragen, and increase enthusiasm in developing the education sector in Sragen,” he asserted.

Improving Teacher Quality

Similar sentiments were expressed by the District Head of Banjarnegara, Sutedjo Slamet Utomo who hoped USAID PRIORITAS assistance would create top-quality schools serving as role models for other schools. He believed it would improve education performance in Banjarnegara.

The key factor, he thought, was teacher quality improvement. “Being a USAID PRIORITAS partner is our opportunity to drive change. Teachers in partner schools have to become agents of change and drive improvement in their schools so that the schools become role models for other schools,” he added.

Smart Flexible Batang

In Batang, the Deputy District Head, H. Soetadi emphasized the importance of developing good quality education services in order to create a smart and flexible community in the district.

USAID PRIORITAS is focusing on three key elements in education and received his endorsement. “This partnership must be fully supported for the improvement of education in Batang to develop quality education that is relevant to the needs of the Batang community,” he said.

Full Dissemination

In relation to the program socialization, the District Head of Semarang, H. Mundjirin said that he hoped, “This socialization will serve as more than an information dissemination event. It should mark the start of real action that will make a positive impact.”

Dissemination of education quality improvement was also mentioned by the Secretary of Purbalingga, Imam Subijakto. “Although initially only two sub-districts are involved in the program, when the program ends all 18 sub-districts in Purbalingga should be involved in dissemination of the program,” he added.

Example from Local Facilitators

The enthusiasm to create top-quality schools in partner regions was warmly welcomed by Pak Nurkolis, the USAID PRIORITAS Central Java Provincial Coordinator. He assured the participants that this enthusiasm will be nurtured by USAID PRIORITAS. One way to do this will be to develop good quality local training facilitators, who will become an asset for local government to use to support their own training.

The Head of Purbalingga Education Office Ishak reminded the local facilitators, “As local facilitators you must give a good example and be the change agents for education quality. You must master the knowledge of your field and be able to use IT and you must also be creative and innovative,” he stated.

Empowering Facilitators, Providing Supplementary Funds

Banjarnegara. Imam Muhdi, a Member of Commission D of the Banjarnegara Local House of Representative warmly welcomed the presence of USAID PRIORITAS. “I truly appreciate and support the USAID PRIORITAS program. This program is one of the strategies supporting the Banjarnegara District Head’s vision and mission to improve the quality of education in the district. I am certain that all education stakeholders will welcome the initiative,” said Imam who is also the chair of Himpaudi (Himpunan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini – Early Childhood Education Association) in Banjarnegara.

In relation to local training facilitators, he said, “They need to be mentored and coached because they are the front-liners of this program. Facilitators will be a key factor in improving our education quality.” On the education budget, Imam stated that Banjarnegara has a sufficient budget allocation for education.

USAID PRIORITAS programs in Banjarnegara will be supported with district funds. Imam Muhdi asserted, “Will the education office and related institutions please submit your programs to us so we can include them in our budget planning?” (Arz)
PRIORITAS - East Java

Bangkalan Disseminates Accountability Reporting Training

Bangkalan-East Java. USAID PRIORITAS and Bangkalan Education Office on 21-23 December 2012 held a dissemination of Government Agency Performance Accountability Report Writing training. The training was part of the dissemination of the DBE program that ended in 2011.

This training is crucial as accountability reporting normally focuses only on budgets and activities and fails to report on the benefits for the community or related stakeholders. After the training, education offices will be able to write accountability reports that can be used as benchmarks to measure the success of a program.

This program was facilitated by Adri Budi, the USAID PRIORITAS East Java Governance and Management Specialist and R.Ayu Diana K, the USAID PRIORITAS East Java District Coordinator for Bangkalan and Sampang.

The activity was attended by 90 participants including the education office head, department heads, section heads, sub-division heads, local technical unit heads and staff representing various departments in the Bangkalan Education Office.

“Thanks to this training, I now understand better the documents that must be completed in each institution and how they relate to the strategic plan, our work plans, accountability reports, the mid-term local development plan and the mid-term national development plan. I also understand the impact if one of these documents is not completed,” said Moh. Kamil M.Pd, Secretary of the Bangkalan Education Office who participated in the training.

The Head of the Bangkalan Education Office M. Mohni, MM was enthusiastic in attending the training. He not only opened and closed the event, he also participated fully in the training. (Rad)

KKG and KKKS Benefit from Dewantoro CRC Tuban as Learning Center

Tuban - East Java. The Cluster Resource Center (CRC), Dewantoro Merakurak, Tuban is located at SDN Sambonggede 1 and regularly holds activities. “School Principals Working Group (KKKS) and Teachers Working Group (KKG) activities are held regularly in the Dewantoro CRC,” said Dra. Suharti, the Dewantoro CRC Manager.

Besides functioning as a place to hold teachers’ meetings, activities held by this center encourage teachers to be creative. In teachers working group meetings, for example, teachers learn from their peers how to create inexpensive learning aids for students from waste materials.

Their work is often sent to competitions and has won prizes at cluster and district levels. Moreover, Dewantoro CRC is widely known as an ICT center. Teachers frequently visit the CRC to learn computer applications and use the internet. This center has a lot of ICT equipment and is open for teachers who would like to learn ICT.

The Head of the Tuban District Education Office, Drs. Sutrisno, MM regularly supports the activities at the CRC. “I’m sure that the CRC can help solve issues related to learning,” he said. He also involves the Dewantoro CRC in many education activities, for instance, education fairs and teachers competitions. (Dra. Suharti, the Dewantoro CRC Manager)
MTsN Binamu: National Champion because of Reforms in Learning

Jeneponto-South Sulawesi. “MTsN Binamu used to be seen as a poor quality school because mainly students who were not accepted at other secondary schools enrolled here. We struggled to change the negative image,” said Nuraedah, S.Pd, M.Pd MTs Binamu Principal who is also a USAID PRIORITAS local training facilitator.

To improve the quality of her school, Nuraedah benefited from her role as a DBE training facilitator. As the school principal she trained her teachers and staff to reform the student learning experience. She, as a USAID PRIORITAS math facilitator, believes that a good school is determined by good quality learning.

The school reforms she carried out are as follows: (1) improving teacher quality through independent replication of DBE active learning training; (2) issuing a school principal decree to support active learning in all subjects; (3) establishing a MGMP (teacher working group) development and support team through peer teacher programs, in which DBE facilitators became peer mentors for other teachers; (4) ensuring teachers took part in MGMP programs organized by the education office; (5) partnering with education office supervisors to provide learning supervision for teachers; (6) ensuring the implementation of active learning through her assignment and evaluation of class teachers and their work; (7) providing funding for learning materials and stationery.

Nuraedah believes that learning reform should be done comprehensively and supported by everyone in the school. With her team she identified the key areas that became the focus of quality improvement.

Their hard work has resulted success. In the 2012 Best and Most Innovative MTs competition in South Sulawesi. MTs Binamu won first place. Also, they won first place in the national level of another Madrasah competition and received an award from the Minister of Religious Affairs. Its students also won several competitions. In 2012 alone they won 1st place in Provincial Tilawah Alquran competition, 4th place in science in the Provincial Science and Math Olympiad and 2nd place in the Provincial Scout competition. (Ham)

Partnering with Local Library to Increase Interest in Student Reading

Makassar-South Sulawesi. Increasing the availability of books and learning sources became a challenge for SMPY PGRI Makassar. The school library only had a limited number and variety of books. They have, therefore, developed a partnership with the local library in Makassar. “This partnership was started in mid-2011. The objective is to increase the student’s interest in reading. A weak spot in our students is lack of interest in reading. The school needs to motivate them,” said Nasrah, S.Pd Principal of SMPY PGRI Makassar who is also a USAID PRIORITAS local facilitator.

The program is managed by three teachers, Novianti, Haisyah, and Idham. They plan and arrange reading services for 526 students in groups: 12 groups each have 2 hours of reading time in line with the mobile library schedule. The main tasks of the teachers are to: (1) set reading tasks, which can be based on school subjects or current issues; (2) help students find related books and titles; (3) help them map and find core ideas in the book; (4) help them draw conclusions, and (5) facilitate post-reading class discussion. Novianti said this program has motivated students to enjoy books and reading. The results are pleasing. The students now can write book reviews and have won competitions. They dominated the 2012 Reading Competition in Makassar, winning 1st place and 3rd place, and won an honorable mention in the Book Review Competition. In the same year they also won 4th place in the Makassar Reading Ambassador competition. (Ham)
Demonstrating Natural Energy with Stones and Windmills

Aceh Besar-Aceh. That morning a group of fourth grade MIN Jeurela 2 Aceh Besar students were hunting for a pair of stones each. After that Mr. M. Nur and Ms. Asri called the students together and asked them to form a circle. “Now rub a stone in your right hand against one in your left hand!” M. Nur, the fourth grade teacher ordered. The students laughed, then some students suddenly threw down the stones they were rubbing because they were too hot. “It is natural energy, children,” explained Ms. Asri and some of the students agreed as they began to understand that their teacher meant.

That morning session was on natural energy. Using simple materials like stones, windmills and balloons that can be obtained easily, the students become more interested in the lesson. During the lesson they could play and learn about energy at the same time. “Students often find difficulty in understanding topics related to energy if they are delivered by lecture. Energy can often not be seen, but can be felt,” Ms. Asri added.

Next, the teachers showed another example of energy produced by water using a waterwheel. The students were asked to pour water on top of the wheel so that the wheel spun and generated energy. In the session, there was a lot of discussion between teachers and students and the students were confident in asking their teacher questions. The students said that they were happy with the approach. With this type of learning approach the students were expected to learn to make use of natural energy efficiently.

The students can also get more knowledge about energy around them. “Hopefully, they can be wiser in making use of natural energy,” Mr. Nur hoped. (Tmk)

House of Plastic Waste

Aceh Besar-Aceh. SDN Lam Isek, Aceh Besar, that has just finished cleaning up after the tsunami hit 8 years ago, has accustomed its student to recycle their waste into art and craft ideas. “We have got the students used to separating dry waste and liquid waste,” said the school Vice Principal Ms. Rosnati Agib.

A waste basket has been specially designed to separate recycled waste. Using wood and wire as its materials, the big house-shaped waste basket is made so students can see the inside and enjoy the special shape. “At first, it was difficult to educate the students. However, in the end we’ve been able to get them used to it,” added Ms. Rosnati.

We noticed that during the recess the students went to the corner of the school yard to throw plastic waste in the bin. Several students brought used plastic bottles to be discarded in the House of Plastic Waste. They have learned that waste can be recycled and reused, especially for art and craft.

A lot of artwork made by the students was from the House of Plastic Waste. Flower pots, plastic flowers, bookmarks and blinds are just a few examples of what the students have made from waste materials. This practice is not only a good example of recycling waste, but it is also a great example of healthy living. After throwing away the waste, students are encouraged to wash their hands; the school has installed sink for the students. “We deliberately familiarize the students with healthy living at school so they apply it at home,” said Ms. Agib. (Tmk)
Model of Traffic Lights from Used Lunch Boxes

When we are driving we see traffic lights on the street. These traffic lights gave Mimma Istiadha, A. Ma, Pd, a sixth grade teacher at SDN Betro Sedati Sidoarjo, the idea of introducing electrical circuits to her students using used lunch boxes.

Sidoarjo-East Java. When teaching science about simple electrical circuits at the sixth grade she was trying to find ways to make the learning more interesting for the students. “I saw many used lunch boxes at home, and I came up with an idea to make a model of traffic lights using those boxes. Used plastic bags were recycled for the colored lights,” she added.

At first, the sixth grade students of SDN Betro, that was a partner school of the USAID DBE project, were sorted into five groups; each group made a different circuit. The students prepared the materials: three used lunch boxes, used plastic bags, rubber bands, plywood, cables, small light bulbs and batteries, all of which are inexpensive and easy to get hold of.

After the preparation was complete, each group assembled their electrical circuits. To make traffic lights, using a parallel circuit, they made holes in their boxes and covered them with red, yellow and green plastic bags, as in a traffic light. They then made holes in the back of the box to install cables and light bulbs. The wires were connected to switches and a battery on the plywood. After they were all connected, the three switches were turned on manually in sequence to make them light like traffic lights. Towards the end of the lesson, each group presented the results of their work.

The group now understands how traffic lights work and told their classmates about the advantages of serial, parallel and mixed circuits. The science class was also more interesting for the students because they could learn from first-hand experience.

Ms. Mimma and the sixth grade students of SDN Betro managed to make traffic lights using used lunch boxes

(Mimma Istiadha, A. Ma, Pd, SDN Betro Sixth Grade Teacher, East Java)

Sixth grade science class on Simple Electrical Circuits

- Competency Standard: 7. Demonstrating the use and transfer of energy
- Basic Competency: 7.2 Presenting information on the transfer and change of electrical energy

Traffic light simulation

Materials:
- 3 used lunch boxes
- 3 used plastic bags
- Cables and rubber bands
- 3 light bulbs
- 3 batteries
- Plywood
Active Learning using Adventure Model

Bogor-JawaBarat. Many learning models have been used in class, including cooperative learning. However, cooperative learning is often known as only as group work. Students sit in groups, but they do not interact as a group and learn from their peers. Students are grouped but work individually.

I developed a cooperative learning model to use outside the class, because, when I teach social science in class VIII-G when it is nearing the end of the school day, the students are already tired. I prepared beforehand 10 questions from the topic “players in the economy”. Then I cut up the questions and glued them to pieces of cardboard.

In the first recess, the pieces of cardboard were spread around the school; some were stuck on the flag pole, some placed on the stairs and some under flower pots.

After that, I entered the class and started the lesson. I told the students about the lesson objectives, asked a few higher order thinking questions related to the learning objectives and introduced the adventure learning model to the students. I divided the students into groups and instructed them to read about economic players for 10 minutes. In the previous meeting the students had been given a reading task as homework.

After reading, they had to look for the questions I had previously hidden around the school and write the answers on the worksheet.

The activity was similar to a paper chase and it took 40 minutes. It was fun and the students enjoyed the challenge.

In this lesson they needed to work together to solve the questions. When they found a question they had to answer the question and go on to find more questions until the time was up.

Next they returned to class and presented their answers. We started with groups that had answered all the questions and continued to those who had answered 9 questions and so on. The order of the presentation was based on the group’s performance.

The students were given the chance to evaluate other groups’ presentation. To maintain their focus between presentations I gave them ice breaking activities.

At the end of the session I encouraged the students to reflect on the session. The questions I gave for reflection:

- Was today’s learning in line with the lesson objectives?
- What new knowledge did you learn today?
- What are the benefits of learning about players in the economy?
- I also gave them non-structured homework. It was to find pictures or photos about players in the economy on the internet or in magazines and comment on them and then submit the work the following week.

The cooperative learning that I implemented was also consistent with active, creative, effective, and enjoyable learning approaches. The students interacted, communicated, acted as a team and learned from each other. The lesson provided them with the opportunity to develop their teamwork and communication skills. These skills are important in real life.

I was also pleased to see that the students were inclusive and open to different opinions. The experience in working with people with different religions, ethnic groups, academic achievement or gender makes the students respect the differences. In cooperative learning there are two principles that make the learning experience effective.

The first is positive dependency. All group members are dependent on other members to reach the group’s goals, for example to complete the task given by the teacher. The second is individual responsibility. Each member must contribute to the group and work together. It is important for us to learn cooperative learning approaches and their correct application to avoid misunderstanding the concept.

Trisno Widodo, SMPN 11
Teacher - Bogor, Jawa Barat

*) Editor’s note: There are different ways to run the discussion or presentation session. To make sure that every group has equal opportunity, each group can present the answers once or two questions. The presentation can also start with the weakest group, instead of the strongest one, so the group gets the opportunity to respond to questions. It is crucial to build their confidence. More difficult questions should be given to those who are up to the challenge.
Using Shadows to Calculate the Height of Objects

Sibolga-North Sumatra. At school, we do not have high-tech equipment to teach math. We are lucky, however, to have the sun and many trees. I used both to teach the Basic Competency: Comparison of Two Objects. It would be impossible to ask students to climb a tree to determine its height. Therefore, I used the tree's shadow to help the students calculate the tree's height.

I started by giving them a challenge. I convinced them that the height of tall buildings can be calculated without actually climbing the buildings. We only need a measurement tape and a T-shaped stick. I handed them the worksheet and asked them to go outside the class and calculate the height of objects around the school, such as the flag pole and trees.

I gave them an example of calculating the height of the flag pole. First, they had to measure the length of the pole's shadow and wrote it on their worksheet. Next, I placed the T stick in parallel with the shadow, and asked the students to measure the distance from the T stick to the tip of the shadow. Since the height of the T stick had already been measured, the students could compute the height of the flag pole (see picture).

Unfortunately the sun is not always shining in Sibolga. The weather here is variable and hard to predict. At this time of year it often rains. In the classroom I used a flashlight as a replacement for the sun as can be seen in the illustration below.

It works the same way as the sun. We beamed the flashlight on to the object and observed the shadow. After measuring the shadow, we continued the process with the T stick and in the end we came up with the actual height of the object.

After the experiential learning ended, I continued the classroom session by giving the students a short test on what they had learned. The result was good; the students could answer the questions given.

Muhammad Hartoyo, MTsN
Sibolga Math Teacher, North Sumatra.

Photo caption:
1. The experiment can be conducted in the classroom if it is cloudy. A flashlight can be used to substitute for sunlight
2. Students using a measuring tape to determine the length of the shadow
3. With the T stick students can measure the shadow's angle
4. Indoor experiment using flashlight, T stick, and measuring tape
5. Students recorded their findings and reported to the class
At 10.15 AM, ringgggg….. the school bell at MTs Nurul Huda Kalanganyar, Sedati, Sidoarjo was ringing as a sign that recess was over. Students were running to their class to start their lessons.

Sidoarjo-East Java. Soon a woman’s voice was heard in each class through the speakers reminding the students that they had to read for 10 minutes. All seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students took a book from the shelves and read while their teachers prepared book review sheets for the students. After 10 minutes, the students took the book review sheet and filled it in for 5 minutes; they wrote about what they had read that day.

The activity is conducted every day and lasts until they finish reading a whole book. After they have a read a book, they complete their book review sheet and hand it to the teacher to sign.

This reading program has been developed because the school principal Drs. H. Misbahuddin, MM. felt that the students were not interested in reading books. The library had few visitors. He finally initiated the reading program. “At first the students felt that they were forced to read, but in the end reading has become a habit.” Misbahuddin, MTsN Nurul Huda Kalangayr School Principal

The students can also borrow books from the library to read in class, but currently they have read nearly all the collections there. Hence, every academic year Misbahudin has to add new collections in the library to keep up with the students’ reading demands. He has asked the school committee to help by adding to the collection.

Sekar Wulandari, Class VIIIA student, said that the program encouraged her to read. “Reading used to be the least of my priorities. Now I am addicted to reading because of the program,” she added.

Ringgggg………..
the Students are Keen to Read
Reading Program at MTs Nurul Huda Kalanganyar

“At first the students felt that they were forced to read, but in the end reading has become a habit.”
Misbahuddin, MTsN Nurul Huda Kalangayr School Principal

Popular books and novels are the students’ favorite books. A completed book review sheet that has been signed by the teacher.
**Hooray ... I Know Why Objects Float**

**Makassar-South Sulawesi.** Fikriyyah, SD Inpres Bertingkat Mamajang III Makassar, a fourth grade student made a very good presentation. It was clear that she has talent as a public speaker. She held her completed worksheet in her hands, but did not need to read from it. She was relaxed and made a lot of eye contact. She represented her four other group members as she presented their experiment on buoyancy.

That afternoon Fikriyyah and her classmates learned about buoyancy, discussing the sub-topic ‘Earth Forces’ in their science class. As instructed in the worksheet made by their fourth grade teacher, Ms. Handayani, the students worked in 5 groups and conducted an experiment to observe the behavior of objects when placed in water; whether they floated or sank.

Each group used inexpensive and simple learning media such as marbles, nails, table tennis balls, styrofoam, small stones and small pieces of wood. During the experiment, they had to: (1) observe what happened to the objects, when they were put in a water container made from a used plastic water bottle, (2) record the findings in an observation table, (3) describe their observation of each object: were the sinking objects always large or heavy?

In the presentation and Q&A session, all the presenters gave their explanations why objects float or sink. The class was buzzing when Ms. Handayani let her students come up with her reasons. “I explained that large or heavy objects didn’t always sink. It’s the same as smaller or lighter objects; they didn’t necessarily float,” Fikriyyah exclaimed enthusiastically.

“Wow!” asked one of her friends. “It is because although the objects are big and heavy, they are porous. They contain air, and that’s why they don’t sink; they float. It’s like the Principle of Archimedes, an object floats if its density is smaller than water’s density, like ships,” Fikriyyah explained the Archimedes Principle.

“Right, friends? Is that correct, mam?” she asked her teacher. “Yes Fikriyyah, your explanation is correct,” replied Handayani. “Hooray... I know why objects float!” exclaimed Fikriyyah.

**Exploring Students’ Skills**

Ms. Handayani taught Basic Competency: 7.1 – Drawing the conclusion that forces can affect the movement of an object. She explained the learning objectives: observing the behavior of objects when placed in water. The lesson time was confined to 2 x 35 minutes. Different contextual learning methods including experimenting, group discussion, presentations and question and answer succeeded in keeping the students focused and active.

She started the lesson by asking contextual questions. Throughout the main activity she encouraged her students to take part in the experiment. At the end of the lesson she added some enrichment. “Every session my role is as a facilitator. My task is to make them use their skills and participate in the activities. I use different methods to deal with their learning problems. Some of them are shy, reluctant to work in groups, and have difficulty concentrating,” Ms. Handayani added.
USAID PRIORITAS is a five year program funded by USAID and implemented by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI), Education Development Center (EDC), and World Education (WE). USAID PRIORITAS is designed to improve access to quality basic education in Indonesia, particularly 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, education and teacher training institutions and government in all levels. The content of this newsletter does not necessarily represent the official views of USAID or the US Government.

The primary school SD/MI (facilitators) learned an integrated thematic approach using PAKEM: In the teaching practices session the participants used an integrated thematic approach using PAKEM. Lessons were designed around a predetermined theme to develop the students' concepts. As a result, the learning experience was more interesting and challenging.

Junior Secondary Schools (SMP/MTs) used Contextual Learning that Facilitates Students’ Higher Order Thinking and includes Analysis, Evaluation and Creativity.

(1) Students developing different alternatives to create networks of cubes and describing the process. (2) Students seeking information on changes of attitude towards the development of technology by interviewing teachers, students and school staff. They then developed class rules on the use of technology in school. (3) Making use of rice fields surrounding the area of the school as learning media. (4) SMPN 3 Binjai students writing a recount text in English.

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