

# **What Works in Unlocking Local Resources**

**A Case Study in National and Community-Based Alliances**

By Maria Corazon de la Paz and Christy Macy

Preface by Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala II



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Her most current writing consultancy assignments is the Process Documentation for the World Bank Project, City Development Strategies; three “Philippine Regional Data Sheets on Population, Health and the Environment” for the Population Reference Bureau in Washington D.C.; and the Manual on “Responding to Church Issues on Religion, Gender and Sexuality” for the Health Action Information Network.

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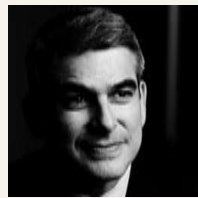
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**T**he commitment to work together as a community to achieve shared goals — what we call the “*bayanihan*” spirit — is deeply ingrained in the Filipino culture. It is also at the heart of the global movement toward corporate social responsibility (CSR). To me, CSR is the natural impulse of people to address the needs of society, as well as a strategic tool for companies to build trust within the communities they serve. In developing countries such as the Philippines, however, corporate philanthropy must be about more than doing good. Given strained and often inadequate government resources, the private sector’s participation in the struggle for economic growth and social justice is an absolute necessity.

One of the most exciting developments I have witnessed in the Philippines over my business career is not just the growth of CSR but also the sincere willingness of businesses to join government agencies, multi-lateral donors, foundations, nonprofits and their own colleagues and even their commercial competitors in working together to achieve scale and impact on a national level. Through these multi-sectoral partnerships and alliances, we are able to extend the reach and improve the effectiveness of social programs so they can benefit more citizens in areas of greatest need.

In 2003, for example, the Ayala Foundation became involved with the International Youth Foundation in just such a collaboration. That year, Nokia, Pearson, IYF, and the United Nations Development Programme designed a model program to improve learning in under-served classrooms through educational videos and mobile technologies supplemented by intensive teacher training. Bridgeit’s pilot program in the Philippines became *text2teach* — an innovative program that today is improving the teaching of math, science, and English in 122 of our public elementary schools. *Text2teach* is supported locally in our country by Ayala Foundation, SEAMEO-INNOTECH, the Department of Education, Globe Telecom, Dream Satellite, Chikka, and many others. Some of the most under-served students in our country can now benefit from this state-of-the-art educational program.

I am so pleased that many of the same partners who worked together to make *text2teach* so successful are now part of a far broader effort — the Education and Livelihood Skills Alliance (ELSA) — aimed at improving the lives and prospects of young people in the impoverished region of Mindanao. Once again, leaders in the public, private, and NGO sectors, with invaluable support from USAID, have joined forces to develop a creative solution to some intractable problems. The result has been concrete progress in opening up education and employment opportunities and in leadership development among some of our country’s most vulnerable youth.

From my perspective in the corporate world, this same visionary and innovative leadership must be harnessed to create a more just society as well as build a successful business. By working together, we can mobilize greater resources and also unleash the power of citizens — including our young people — to shape a better future. That sense of empowerment, I believe, is the key to human progress.

**Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala II**  
Chairman and CEO, Ayala Corporation



PHOTO BY NANCY SHEPPARD

*“By working together, we can mobilize greater resources and also unleash the power of citizens — including our young people — to shape a better future. That sense of empowerment, I believe, is the key to human progress.”*





**B**uilding public/private partnerships is a remarkably effective strategy to affect change and promote opportunity. To see why, just read this report highlighting the progress that has been made in the Philippines. While many of us have seen firsthand the benefits of bringing together the public, private, and non-governmental sectors of society to reduce poverty and empower communities, such alliances are a relatively recent phenomenon.

In the 1970s, for example, 70 percent of the resources flowing from the United States to other countries came from official development assistance — with 30 percent from private funds. Today, that formula has been turned on its head. Now, given increased trade and globalized businesses and investment, nearly 85 percent of the resources to developing countries comes in the form of private investment, with only 15 percent from public funding or development transfers. As a result of this dramatic shift, global companies and others in the private sector have become far more engaged in development issues globally. And increasingly, they partner with community-based institutions to get the job done.

Seeking to capture and promote this collaborative approach, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) established in 2001 the Global Development Alliance, which has been a great success. The Education and Livelihood Skills Alliance (ELSA), described here in this *What Works* publication, is one of GDA's model partnerships, where the U.S. government's foreign aid program has invested both its "venture capital" and institutional and human resources to assist, and in fact leverage, this work in the Philippines. Over the past seven years, the GDA has helped fund more than 400 such public private alliances worldwide with a variety of multinational and national corporations, NGOs and foundations. We salute the agency's creativity and initiative, by which USAID has been able to tap into private funding sources, while developing partnerships at the local and national level to address specific challenges such as education, employment, economic growth, or the environment. Also, thanks to GDA and similar efforts, the civil society sector is playing an even greater role in advancing social and economic progress.

I would like to offer special thanks and appreciation to Jon D. Lindborg, Mission Director, USAID/Philippines and his Office of Education team, who exemplify this spirit of cooperation among all sectors of society.

Over the past few years, USAID and the International Youth Foundation have joined forces in countries around the world to improve young people's lives and prospects. One key lesson we have learned is the critical importance of having experienced, committed people on the ground to help shape, manage, and implement effective programs. It would be difficult to find a more outstanding group of national foundations, corporate leaders, and grass-roots NGOs than the ones leading ELSA today.

Building these alliances is hard work. So is trying to make a difference in under-served regions like Mindanao. Yet ELSA has become a model multi-stakeholder partnership through its ongoing exchange of best practices, its commitment to local capacity building activities, and its remarkable leveraging of in-kind and financial contributions. We hope this publication — with its insights, stories, and lessons learned — will inspire and help guide similar endeavors here in the Philippines and across the globe.

**William S. Reese**

*President and CEO, International Youth Foundation*



PHOTO BY NANCY SHEPPARD

*“ELSA has become a model multi-stakeholder partnership — through its ongoing exchange of best practices, its commitment to local capacity building activities, and its remarkable leveraging of in-kind and financial contributions.”*



In the following pages, you will learn about some of the young people from the Philippines’ Mindanao region whose lives have been turned around because of the work of the Education and Livelihood Skills Alliance (ELSA), a partnership of the International Youth Foundation, the Ayala Foundation, the Consuelo Foundation, the Petron Foundation, the Philippines Business for Social Progress, and SEAMEO-INNOTECH.

You will meet Amat Handan, a 17-year-old who dropped out of school and was at risk for being recruited into an armed resistance group. Today, he has a job for the first time in his life, working in an auto repair shop. Namieza Ahamad, 12 years of age, now attends class in a newly constructed school building where enrollment has jumped due to better learning conditions. Ashraf Wahabi, 16, is better able to work with in a team and is more actively involved in peace building in his community after his participation in a youth leaders camp. Patrina was terribly abused while working as a house cleaner in Kuwait. Now back at home, she’s gained the skills and confidence to help manage a hotel through a job training program.

In this report, you will see how many local NGOs, government agencies, parent and teacher organizations, and local businesses have come together to make a real difference in these young people’s lives and why ELSA member organizations decided to choose “One heart, one team, one dream” as their motto.

*What Works in Unlocking Local Resources: A Case Study in National and Community-Based Alliances* is based on numerous interviews, site visits, and consultations in Manila and across Mindanao over the past two and a half years. Going beyond detailing the results of ELSA’s unique partnership, the study examines the process of alliance building itself. What have we learned about bringing NGOs together at the national and local level to work as a team rather than individually? What mechanisms and organizational structures were put in place to allow for both a flexible but focused plan of action? What were some of the early stumbling blocks and challenges, and how were they resolved?

Most important, we wanted to explore the extent to which this powerful alliance has been able to unlock resources, energy, and expertise at the local level and become a model that has gained the support of local communities, government leaders, and local businesses. How has this process changed over the years, and what steps need to be taken to improve the implementation and impact of ELSA in the future? Through this report, in other words, we hope our readers recognize both the challenges and rewards of working in partnership to achieve a shared goal and a common dream.

We extend our deepest appreciation to the individuals and organizations who have made ELSA such an effective and innovative alliance — one that has touched more than 125,000 lives. The many achievements reflected in this report are a tribute to their hard work and deep commitment. We would like to acknowledge as well the invaluable support of USAID, especially Tom Kral, Cognizant Technical Officer at the Office of Education, as well as the Department of Education, who have helped us deliver these services and training programs. We look forward to deepening and expanding our work together, so that more Filipino youth can succeed in school, find a job, help build the peace, and realize their dreams.

**Ray Dean Salvosa,**  
*Chair, ELSA Steering Committee*  
**Jack Boyson,**  
*ELSA Project Director/Chief of Party*

**Dr. Zenaida Domingo,**  
*ELSA Deputy Project Director/Chief of Party*  
**Tito Gonzalo Rivera,**  
*ELSA Secretariat Manager*



PHOTO BY JAN MARISTELL

*“We extend our deepest appreciation to the individuals and organizations who have made ELSA such an effective and innovative alliance — one that has touched more than 125,000 lives.”*





PHOTO BY CHRISTY MACY

*As a result of ELSA, more than 60 new classrooms were constructed, with 80 more renovated and repaired.*

## A Dramatic Need, a Collective Response

Amat Handan, 17, is a Muslim youth from Basilan, an island in the Mindanao region of the Philippines. His uncle, a commander in one of the region's rebel armies, has sought to recruit his nephew from a young age. A few years ago, Amat joined the more than 250,000 young people who have dropped out of school in that area, admitting that after he left high school, he "had nothing to do, and no skills." This past year, he made an important life decision. Instead of joining the rebel army, he enrolled in a job skills training program where he gained practical mechanics and employability skills. He also attended classes that gave him a greater understanding of how to build a more peaceful community among Muslims and Christians. Today, Amat is employed for the first time in his life, working in an auto repair shop in Basilan's Isabela City. "My uncle keeps trying to recruit me," he says, "but I don't want to be part of the violence, especially now that I have a job." He adds: "I've learned that I can contribute to peace."

Usop Watamama Sumlay, 15, is a former out-of-school youth who enrolled last year in a program that offers alternative learning opportunities for the many Filipino youth who no longer attend school. "Attending these classes helped me catch up on the things that I missed when I dropped out," he says. Today, according to his advisor, Usop is now back in school, and is one of the top students in his class.<sup>1</sup>

Namieza Ahamad, age 12, is a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student at Yunos Jum dai Elementary School in Tawi-Tawi, one of the poorest provinces in the Philippines. For years, she and her fellow students faced significant problems in their school. "I didn't come to school when it rained," Namieza says, "because the roof leaked and we'd get wet." Also, there were no rest rooms, so sometimes the girls went home and didn't return to school that day. Now, Namieza attends classes in a newly constructed school — which offers its students new facilities, new books and other learning materials, and renewed hope for a better life. These improvements have brought real change. Attendance has shot up, and the school's enrollment has soared from 200 to 380 students. "I'm excited to have so many students, and to see how much more they are able to concentrate," says Parwisa Sajili, the school's 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, who is also pleased that so many more teachers have gained access to teacher training.

The stories of Amat, Usop, and Namieza reflect some of the dramatic changes in the lives of young Filipinos that can be traced back to September 28, 2004, when the International Youth Foundation (IYF), in cooperation with leading Filipino NGOs, foundations, and socially minded organizations, launched the Education and Livelihood Skills Alliance (ELSA), a program to improve access to quality education among Filipino youth. Those founding partners were the Ayala Foundation, the Consuelo Foundation, the Petron Foundation, Philippine Business for Social Progress, and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO-INNOTECH).

Supported through a US\$4.2 million grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and US\$4.8 in leverage from Alliance members and their partners, ELSA is a multi-stakeholder, multi-sector partnership that works to expand school and

"My uncle keeps trying to recruit me but I don't want to be part of the violence, especially now that I have a job. I've learned that I can contribute to peace."

— Amat Handan, 17

<sup>1</sup> Insights, Education & Livelihood Skills Alliance 2006 Annual Newsletter



community-based learning and employment programs among under-served children and youth. For nearly three years, ELSA has worked with the Department of Education and the government of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), as well as a wide range of local foundations and community, parent and teacher organizations to benefit the young people living in these impoverished and often conflict-affected communities.

## WHY ELSA? WHY NOW?

ELSA was launched at a time when the children and youth of the ARMM and other conflict affected areas in the region were facing grave uncertainties and challenges in their lives. Some 40% of Filipinos live on US\$2 a day or less, and the Mindanao region is one of the most impoverished in the country. Of particular concern was the region's serious deficits in the area of education for both in-school and out-of-school youth. Poverty, political and social instability, and an ongoing armed resistance, compounded by a weak educational system, deprived far too many of the region's youth from accessing the knowledge and skills they needed to be successful in school and at work.

Access to educational opportunities is limited, and when children do attend school, that education is characterized by inequity and poor quality. Lack of teacher training, inadequate support for student learning, and poor school infrastructure are part of a long list of obstacles that needed to be overcome in order to produce well-educated students and prepared workers. Few students get beyond the early grades. In the ARMM, enrollment in elementary school is 64%, and the number of out-of-school youth between the ages of 6 and 15 is the highest in the country. Only 3 of 10 Grade 1 enrollees in the elementary schools complete Grade 6 on time; only 1 out of 10 first graders finish secondary school, while a mere 10% of those graduates are able to finish tertiary education or college.

Illiteracy among the many poor children and youth of Mindanao also contributes to the growing likelihood that they will become victims of abuse, including domestic violence and unfair labor practices. According to the U.S. State Department, for example, an estimated four million Filipino children are working in unskilled and often unpaid jobs. Working as house cleaners, farmers, fishermen, scavengers, vendors and factory workers, these young people not only suffer abuse and work under dangerous conditions. Forced to drop out of school, these youth are often doomed to failure in their efforts to join the social and economic mainstream in their communities.

Youth unemployment is a significant challenge — the result of many of these same conditions. In some areas, it is reported to be as high as 45%. As Dr. Erlinda Pefianco, Director of SEAMEO-INNOTECH, once explained, “this is the part of the Philippines that we all had forgotten, and now we are forced to pay attention. This is a national concern,” she says, “and all of us, including the national government, are responsible” for making progress.

“These young people not only face a life of poverty, discrimination, and isolation,” says Ray Dean Salvosa, Managing Director of the Consuelo Foundation, a leading Filipino NGO and ELSA partner. “Many of them are too poor to go to school, and they feel they don't have any future.” Mindanao's armed insurgency, which has killed between 200,000 and 300,000 people since 1969, further disrupts the lives of families living in the region. Often, armed rebels use school buildings to hide, using the desks as firewood, and stealing educational materials.

In other cases, schools are used as evacuation centers when the local population seeks to flee the violence. Such conditions serve to deepen the education crisis, making it even more difficult for Muslim youth to gain a quality education or meaningful employment.

The enormity of the problem, particularly in the ARMM and other conflict-affected areas, was the basis of IYF's proposal to USAID to convene a multi-sectoral alliance that would work with local institutions to explore and pilot new initiatives and to establish alternative and viable learning options for Mindanao's youth.

## FORMING AN ALLIANCE

Reflecting the urgent need for action, and recognizing the importance of pooling resources and expertise to make real progress, five nationally respected non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and corporate foundations in the Philippines, all of whom had significant program experience in the areas of education, employment, and youth leadership, came together to form the Education and Livelihood Skills Alliance. The following organizations, all major stakeholders in Philippine society, brought with them a high level of experience in the youth development field, valuable networks of people and institutions, and an ability to leverage significant financial and in-kind contributions to the Alliance.

The founding ELSA members:

- **InternationalYouth Foundation:** a global nonprofit organization that implements youth development programs in 70 countries and territories through a global network of partners, was the designated lead organization.
- **Ayala Foundation:** a nonprofit organization that promotes corporate social responsibility (CSR) and contributes to nation-building by providing Filipinos with the skills and tools needed to compete in the global market.
- **Consuelo Foundation:** a nonprofit organization that manages programs focusing on youth, family and community, with an emphasis on reaching disadvantaged, abused, exploited, and out-of-school youth.
- **PetronFoundation:** a national, private development foundation whose aim is to help alleviate poverty throughout the Philippines.
- **Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP):** a corporate-led, national private foundation dedicated to promoting business sector commitment to social development by generating jobs, building social and physical infrastructure, and providing management training to under-served Filipinos.
- **SoutheastAsian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO-INNOTECH):** an organization that develops technology-based solutions to education challenges throughout the Southeast Asian region through training, research and evaluation, and information and communications technology (ICT).

## PART OF A LARGER INITIATIVE

ELSA is part of the Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQuALLS) Project, USAID's umbrella structure to maximize improvements in education and employability among the youth of Mindanao. EQuALLS seeks to achieve four intermediate

Reflecting the urgent need for action, and recognizing the importance of pooling resources and expertise to make real progress, five nationally respected non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and corporate foundations in the Philippines came together to form the Education and Livelihood Skills Alliance.



results (known as IRs): to build community based-learning opportunities in school-less and conflict-affected areas; to improve teaching capacity for math, science and English by increasing access to innovative technologies that make use of highly interactive and easy-to-use multi-media learning packages; to promote the reintegration of out-of-school youth into the peaceful, productive economy by enhancing their employment opportunities; and to reform educational policy.

Interpreting these intermediate goals, ELSA articulated a set of objectives it sought to achieve.

### Expanded Educational Opportunities

- Increase access to basic educational opportunities for children and youth who are both in and out of school
- Offer training for teachers to achieve higher levels of confidence and competence in teaching math, science, and English; and ensure that students will benefit with improved achievement levels in those key subjects
- Provide the tools and leadership skills needed for young people to become more engaged in their communities
- Improve local school administration and effective implementation of educational policies
- Assist Philippine national and ARMM government officials in implementing education policy reform

### Enhanced Livelihood and Employment Opportunities

- Improve the skills, attitudes, and behaviors of youth to enable them to find and keep a job or create their own businesses as young entrepreneurs
- Work with and develop Mindanao-based institutions capable of implementing integrated technical education for out-of-school youth and adults
- Improve access to higher education and employment opportunities for graduates of madaris, as compared to their public school counterparts

The ELSA programs are implemented in the provinces of Maguindanao, Shariff Kabunsuan, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi and Marawi City in the ARMM, the Zamboanga Peninsula in Region 9, Sarangani, Cotabato City, South Cotabato and Cotabato Province in Region 12. Particular emphasis was placed on Maguindanao, where the government estimated that 60.4% of its residents were poor.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Poverty Statistics, National Statistics Coordinating Brand, June 2006, [www.nscb.gov/ph/poverty](http://www.nscb.gov/ph/poverty)

### ELSA'S IMPACT ON YOUNG LIVES: PATRINA'S STORY

Now 23, Patrina dropped out of high school because her family had no money. Her father, who was a fisherman, had died, and her mother was unable to work. Like so many other young people in the Philippines who decide to seek employment outside the country because of lack of

local job opportunities, Patrina went abroad to work in Kuwait as a house cleaner. "It was a terrible experience, they mistreated and abused me," she said, with tears rolling down her cheeks as she recalled that awful period in her life. After four months, she finally fled to the Philippine embassy in Kuwait, and with their assistance was able to return to her home in Tawi-Tawi. While looking for a job, Patrina heard about the ELSA technical job training program and immediately enrolled in hotel management, an 8-month course that offers both job and life skills training. "I have really improved my attitude, and have learned some positive values," she says. "I know how to communicate better, to respect myself and others, and my confidence as an individual has gone up." Patrina still hopes to go to college, and then get a job or start her own business. Clearly this program has given her the confidence to plan ahead. "I hope to own my own small business some day, but that's only a dream."



PHOTO BY CHRISTY MACY

*Patrina (center) is one of over 800 youth to have graduated from ELSA's job training program.*

***"I know how to communicate better, to respect myself and others, and my confidence as an individual has gone up."***

— Patrina, participant, ELSA job training initiative





PHOTO BY CHRISTY MACY

*Improving access to quality education and teacher training was a top priority for ELSA. As part of this focus, more than 15,400 books have been distributed to 45 schools, and more than 730 teachers have enhanced their teaching abilities.*

## An Overview of ELSA Partnerships

This chapter highlights ELSA's accomplishments to date in building a wide range of working partnerships. The first section provides examples of how the national NGOs, many of whom are based in the capital city of Manila, have developed successful local and community-based alliances in Mindanao to help carry out ELSA activities. The second section, which represents a more recent evolution of the Alliance and of the EQuALLS program, offers examples of a “convergence” strategy — where multiple organizations and programs are focused on specific schools, communities, or themes, as a way to maximize the impact on young people and their families. In the process, ELSA has been able to “unlock” local resources and community support, which in turn have strengthened the overall impact and sustainability of the initiative. Such achievements have developed due to an increasingly dynamic interaction between and among Alliance members and their local counterparts in the field — as they move from individually investing time and resources to sharing technical expertise, educational materials, and best practices, and ultimately working together more strategically to have a greater overall impact.

It is interesting to note that over the years, ELSA has raised a new level of awareness among its local implementing and contributing partner organizations — that they can foster positive synergies through participation in development-oriented programs of large, national organizations, and that these programs need their cooperation and support to be successful.

When ELSA first established operations in Mindanao, one of its goals was to improve the capacity of some of the existing community institutions — including schools and their local school boards and administrators, local government units, and parent/teacher/community associations (PTCAs). The goal was to strengthen the capabilities of these institutions so that they could not only become strategic partners to help implement ELSA activities but also help ensure and sustain project gains. In every ELSA initiative, these community-based alliances have provided additional funds and in-kind support for leveraging, as well as logistical and other support for the efficient conduct of activities. The following examples of partnerships underscore the essential role that local partners have played in the initiative's ongoing success.

### SECTION ONE: NATIONAL/LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

This section illustrates, through a series of specific examples, how the national members of ELSA achieved results by using a combination of USAID funds and their own resources — and then complementing those efforts by building the active support of their local partners. These local actors include community organizations as well as local government units (LGUs) and existing government agencies, particularly the Department of Education. This community-driven approach is an evolving process, and ELSA continues to serve as a catalyst to mobilize community interventions to identify problems and issues, and to “leverage” additional support to address them. This strategy has produced positive results in terms of gaining the support from local partners and more importantly, in creating an enabling environment for the sustainability of the initiatives over the long term.

ELSA has been able to “unlock” local resources and community support, which in turn have strengthened the overall impact and sustainability of the initiative.



## A. Expanding Community-Based Learning Opportunities in School-less and Conflict-Affected Areas

*“I come to school more and like studying more because I have the supplies I need to participate in school.”*

— 7-year-old Sati Shani, a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader at John Spirig Memorial Integrated School in Zamboanga City who participates in the ELSA-supported Young Scholars Program.

**Program:** Three ELSA partners, Consuelo Foundation, Petron Foundation and PBSP, exemplify the strategy of working in partnership with local organizations to realize a common goal. They have placed a special emphasis on building up the capabilities of their partners as a way to sustain the gains of the program beyond the life of the ELSA project. Specifically, Petron and PBSP provide school administrators and the parent/teacher/community associations (PTCAs) with training opportunities to enhance their skills in areas such as project planning, implementation and management, resource mobilization and organizational management. This capacity building strategy encourages the local offices of the Department of Education, school administrators and the local government units in the area to respond positively to the ELSA initiative and to get more actively engaged in its programs.

**Partners:** Petron, PBSP, Consuelo Foundation, parents, teachers, school officers, and community leaders

**Purpose:** To enhance educational opportunities for youth living in under-served and conflict-affected areas

**Focus/Strategy:** To build the capacity of local partners

### Unlocking Local Resources

- An example of how Petron and PBSP works with their local partners to enhance the learning environment in ELSA-assisted schools can be seen in the John Spirig Memorial Integrated School, Campo Muslim, Zamboanga City experience. Even before ELSA was launched, Petron had donated a fully-equipped three-room school building to the school. Petron and PBSP’s assistance to the school motivated the PTCA officers and members to actively participate in the planning and implementation stages of the school building construction, particularly in providing unskilled labor, security and storage of construction materials. Moreover, they were given the responsibility of maintenance for the building and other facilities inside the classrooms after it was constructed. In addition, the PTCA formulated guidelines and policies in the use, care and safekeeping of donated books, and assisted the nurses in monitoring health activities and providing health education to the students.

Following the launch of ELSA, the partnership between the alliance’s national partners and the local community has reaped further benefits. Among them are the following:

- Capacity building training for members of the PTCA, with a focus on helping them gain skills and knowledge around project management, through Petron and PBSP.
- Participants in the Young Scholars (Educational Assistance) program, an ELSA-

supported initiative designed to support students at risk of dropping out of school, receive school supplies, shoes, uniforms and bags with Petron and PBSP support. More than 330 grade 1 “scholars” in John Spirig Memorial Integrated School benefited. Expenditures for such supplies were often beyond the ability of a poor family, so having them donated often meant the difference between a child attending school and staying at home. The 10 Philippine peso allowance per day allotted to each scholar was spent for the feeding program — which was managed by the school principal and the Home Economics teacher with the help of the PTCA members.

- Other local partners were also mobilized as a result of this influx of support. For example, the School Boards increased their lobbying efforts, which opened up funding sources for education in public schools from the local government units. School administrators also become more committed to continuously seek additional funds to improve school facilities.
- As a complement to Petron’s scholarship programs, PBSP was able to support livelihood programs for parents and support programs for teachers and students — which built on the sustainability of the projects. These activities also enhanced the capacities and interest of parents to support their children’s education.

### Lessons Learned

The PTCA efforts in supporting ELSA initiatives clearly show that parents can be prime movers in mobilizing untapped community resources toward education-related initiatives — especially those which can directly benefit their children. PBSP/Petron’s assistance also encouraged the active participation of the teachers, school administrators, the Department of Education, local school boards and the parents themselves in making quality education accessible to the children in their community. The school principal, Teresita Bulahan, says that “students come to school more regularly because of the ELSA scholarship program, and I can see a real difference in their achievement scores.” Bulahan, who says she would like to expand the scholarship program, underscores the ongoing need to build partnerships with national and global organizations in order to meet the urgent needs of her students. Overall, ELSA has provided capacity-training to more than 30 PTCAs, enabling more than 850 parents, teachers, and community leaders to be more actively and effectively involved in the supporting local education projects.

## B. Improving teaching capacity for math, science and English in both formal and non-formal education settings

**Program 1 (in-school):** The ELSA *text2teach* program is an innovative educational program that provides educational multimedia resources for grades 5 and 6 teachers in math, science and English. (It provides the school with a cell phone, television set, MediaMaster [satellite dish receiver] for the downloading, storage and viewing of video-audio learning packages in the three core subject areas). In addition to receiving print learning packages, including teachers’ guides and lesson plans, teachers are given intensive training to best utilize the *text2teach* technology and the accompanying teaching guides.

**Program 2 (Alternative Learning System):** In addition to the ELSA *text2teach* project, SEAMEO-INNOTECH and others provide out-of-school youth and young adults the needed competency and skills to enhance their chances for gaining employment and/or acquiring a self-generating income activity. The school learning community/center is provided with

“Students come to school more regularly because of the ELSA scholarship program, and I can see a real difference in their achievement scores.”

— Teresita Bulahan, Principal, John Spirig Memorial Integrated School

Although the ELSA *text2teach* program is primarily for grades 5 and 6 students, teachers also invited lower grade pupils to view some video-audio clips.

a DVD player, ALS print modules for the elementary and secondary levels as well as the complementing digital materials in DVD and VCD formats.

**Partners:** SEAMEO-INNOTECH, Alliance for Mindanao Off-Grid Renewable Energy (AMORE) [for program 1 only], PBSP, DepED, PTCAs, LGUs

**Purpose:** To provide innovative educational media technology and learning resources to enhance the teaching and learning processes in math, science and English as well as the livelihood skills intended for alternative learning system (ALS) learners

**Focus:** To strengthen partnership/linkages with the community and stakeholders for the improvement of quality of education in formal and non-formal settings

Unlocking local resources:

- With the provision of alternative, environment-safe electrical power by AMORE, the Dulangan M. Abid Elementary School in Cotabato was selected as one of the ELSA *text2teach* schools.
- The local government unit and the community as a whole continued to support AMORE, a USAID-funded program, by collaboratively maintaining the installed electrification system.
- Likewise, the LGUs and the school communities showed their unified efforts in sustaining the ELSA *text2teach*/ALS programs by helping schools to secure the project equipment and various learning resources.
- PBSP provides scholarship grants to about 85 grade 2 pupils in Malangit Elementary School, with conditions, including that students come from very poor families and had parents or guardians who are active members of associations.
- Although the ELSA *text2teach* program is primarily for grades 5 and 6 students, teachers also invited lower grade pupils to view some video-audio clips. At the same time, the Instructional Managers who conducted alternative learning sessions in Malangit Elementary School gave their learners the opportunity to view ELSA *text2teach* multimedia materials.
- Education supervisors of Maguindanao developed a book, “Reading Is Made Easy,” for their non-reader pupils and ALS learners, which was reproduced by SEAMEO-INNOTECH and distributed to schools in Maguindanao, including Malangit Elementary School.
- PBSP provided the school with reference materials such as dictionaries and fairy tale story books.

Multiple Benefits: Improved Learning and an Engaged Community  
Preliminary results showed that:

- Parents saw positive changes in the attitude and behavior of their children as a result of these enhanced learning opportunities;
- Students in the lower grades increasingly looked forward to reaching grades 5 and 6 so that they would experience the *text2teach* classes;
- Teachers observed a drop in absenteeism;
- Students were more confident and active participants in class discussions because the video/audio clips helped them explore answers to the teacher’s questions;

- The local government unit in the community or the *barangay*, in coordination with the school and the instructional managers, helped recruit ALS learners for the ELSA project;
- Many out-of-school youth and young adults joined the ALS sessions and gained the basic competencies and skills identified by the Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS) of the Department of Education (DepED).

Research Demonstrates Impact of ELSA-supported program

A recently released study confirms the progress being made among Muslim learners as a result of their participation in ELSA *text2teach*. The study demonstrates that exposure to *text2teach* leads to significantly higher learning gains in English, math and science at both grade levels.”<sup>3</sup> The study also reports that Muslim schools in South Cotabato manifested “outstanding performance” due to the *text2teach* program when compared with “predominantly Christian control schools.”

### C. Alternative Learning System for the Non-Formal Education Sector

*“ELSA offers a lot of learning, support, capacity building, and new partners, and that’s what comprehensive development is all about, being focused on one mission.”*

— Professor Sheila Algabre, Notre Dame University

**Program:** ELSA promotes two kinds of educational programs for out-of-school youth to prepare them to either return to the classroom or to find a job. This example describes an 8-month program — part of ELSA’s larger alternative learning system — that integrates life skills training and civic engagement activities for youth learners. As a result, these learners can successfully prepare to take the Philippine Placement Test and the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) exam.

**Partners:** Consuelo Foundation, Mindanao-based NGOs, the academic community, local education officials, government leaders, and members of the local religious community

**Purpose:** To provide opportunities for out-of-school youth in completing their basic education and/or learning vocational or technical skills.

**Focus:** To promote a multi-stakeholder approach for greater efficiency

Unlocking local resources:

Consuelo’s partnership with local NGO, academic, and community leaders greatly enhanced ELSA’s Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) learning sessions for out-of-school youth. Strategies to promote, develop and forge effective networks, alliances and partnerships with these local stakeholders included meetings, consultations and dialogues. These collaborative efforts helped the program to gain support from the

<sup>3</sup> Summative Evaluation of the ELSA *text2teach* Project: Final Report, by Josefina N. Natividad, Sc.D., published by the University of the Philippines Demographic Research Foundation, 2007.

The study demonstrates that exposure to *text2teach* leads to significantly higher learning gains in English, math and science at both grade levels.



The local government demonstrated its full support for the program by providing land for the 30 Community Learning Centers for out-of-school youth in each of the target *barangays*

Department of Education, the local government units, both Municipal Mayors, and the *barangay* councils — to implement the A&E program. Benefits included:

- Support was provided by the local government unit in identifying target *barangays* where the incidence of out-of-school youth (OSY) and drop-out rate of students was high.
- The Selection Committees from the local government units (LGUs) were actively involved in the recruitment and selection process for the instructional managers (IMs) who taught the out-of-school youth. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Cotabato City provided vital support in coordinating the selection process activities for the program.
- During the training of the instructional managers, resource persons from the Bureau of Alternative Learning System of the Department of Education (DepED-BALS) provided the content portion while academic officers and staff handled the other sessions. The use of the tests designed by the DepED-BALS — to determine the applicants' competency level as well as to validate the grade/ year that they declared as their completed level — was an efficient way of ensuring the validity of test results and the acceptability of such results among local school officials.
- The *barangay* chairpersons directly supervised the process of identifying and recruiting candidates for the A&E classes in their respective *barangays*, a strategy which not only saved the program resources but also enhanced the capacities of the LGUs in screening participants for the program.
- The religious leaders of Datu Odin Sinsuat supported the process by regularly airing news about the A&E program in their radio program (the Darusalam Radio Program on DXMY Radio). Officers of government line agencies — such as the Street Educators of DSWD, *barangay* Health Workers of the Department of Health (DOH), and field technicians of the Department of Agriculture (DA) — also contributed their time and material resources for the recruitment of A&E participants. These joint community activities, although not directly planned for by project implementers, enhanced the processes and encouraged participation.
- The LGUs demonstrated their full support for the program by providing land for the 30 Community Learning Centers for out-of-school youth in each of the target *barangays* as well as security for the instructional managers. The parents of the OSYs rendered free services in renovating the centers and in soliciting materials such as benches, blackboards, and tables.
- Community members near the A&E sites expressed their appreciation for the program by offering their services free of charge as Resource Persons during the skills training part of the program. For example, a teacher in Taviran National High School voluntarily offered his time to teach the A&E learners in math. A bamboo bridge in *barangay* Gadungan, Sultan sa Barongis was repaired by the *barangay* council to facilitate transportation for the teachers.

## Results

The impact of Consuelo's partnership with local stakeholders was impressive. Numerous community and government partners actively participated in the recruitment and training process, making it more efficient and effective. Among the many benefits of a strong national/community alliance: a smooth entry to target communities, openness of partners to support project activities, willingness of partners to share project costs, a sense of

ownership that helped realize program goals. Overall, more than 1,840 out-of-school youth have enrolled in the A&E program, and nearly 600 have passed the PEPT/A&E exams and re-enrolled in formal school.

## Collaboration Continues to Flourish

Local *barangay* officials have continued their partnership with ELSA by working together to provide work experience for the trainees of ELSA's ITE job training program so that they can gain valuable volunteer experience. In one instance, Notre Dame University organized 160 ITE trainees to become volunteer street educators, staffing a short-term program for out-of-school children. The *barangay* officials arranged for the venue, and provided security oversight during the activity. One such event was held in April of 2006, where 42 of ELSA's ITE trainees organized a literacy workshop. "The ITE trainees proposed the idea of setting up the workshop aimed at guiding the children in basic reading and writing," observed Sheila Algabre, Community Extension Services Director of Notre Dame University (NDU).<sup>4</sup>

The parents of the participating children followed up with what was taught in the workshop, underscoring their interest to extend the program. The *barangay* council plans to continue the reading program. *(continued on page 26)*

<sup>4</sup> Insights, Education & Livelihood Skills Alliance 2006 Annual Newsletter

***“The ITE trainees proposed the idea of setting up the workshop aimed at guiding the children in basic reading and writing.”***

— Sheila Algabre, Community Extension Services Director, Notre Dame University

## CASE STUDY I

### ELSA'S COMMUNITY-DRIVEN APPROACH

*“Before this new school building was built, students didn’t come to school every day, because of the lack of facilities and the rain.”*

— Parwisa Sajili, 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Haji. Yunos Jumdain Elementary School, Bangao, Tawi-Tawi

#### An Under-served Community

The dirt path to the Haji. Yunos Jumdain Elementary School twists around small wooden shacks and large boulders. The two school buildings are nestled together in a small opening, with rickety wooden boards to allow students and visitors to navigate the large rocks and mud that surround the classrooms. The two buildings could not be more different. The original structure is built of wooden slats, with palm leaves and other local material serving as the roof. When it rains, the students hold up umbrellas to try to keep dry. Most sit on wooden benches and share desks. When the students had only the one school building for their classes, school attendance was markedly low. The building flooded when it rained so students remained at home. There were no toilet facilities, and this particularly made the girls less likely to come to school.

All of that changed two years ago, when a new concrete 3-classroom school building was built alongside the older structure, offering students for the first time a dry and cheerful place for learning. The new classrooms were funded through ELSA, with Petron taking the lead in building the school. For the first time, students have armchairs, tables, and desks, new reading books, ceiling fans, colorful learning aids on the walls, and comfort rooms.

According to Parwisa Sajili, the 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, the new building has made a dramatic difference in her ability to teach and improve her students’ level of achievement. “Before,” she said, “students didn’t come to school every day, because of the lack of facilities and the rain.” As a result of the new building and learning materials provided by ELSA, attendance has improved, and the school’s enrollment has increased from 200 students to 380. She used to have about 20 students in her class and now has 41.

The teachers decided to use the new building for the preschool and grades 4 and 5. “We wanted to get the youngest ones more excited about coming to school, and to encourage the older ones to stay,” explained one teacher. Currently there are 40 students per classroom in the new building, or 120 students in all.

#### Leveraging Resources and Building Capacity

It costs 450,000 pesos per classroom, or 1.35 million pesos to build the 3-classroom building. However, the ELSA/USAID grant was only able to cover 750,000 pesos for the new building, so Petron, as part of its “leverage,” made up the difference. The ELSA initiative also helped strengthen the PTCA, by providing three training and capacity building sessions around such skills as team building, leadership, and strategic planning. Parents are expected to help keep the school grounds clean.

### Mobilizing the Community: How Haji. Yunos Jumdain Elementary School was Built

Members of the local PTCA were extremely active in mobilizing the new resources for Haji. Yunos Jumdain Elementary the school. Here’s their story.

After the birth of his second child, Jerzon J. Hadjirul became increasingly concerned that there was no elementary school in his community. “There were not schools nearby,” he says, “so my neighbors had to send their children to another community for their education.” He and a number of other parents approached the local school superintendent, and began to make an ambitious plan to open their own school. “We were very active, and we put a lot of pressure on the system,” he said. Hja Nuron Arakani, who would become the principal of the new school, joined the parents in demanding action. After a community survey of families, she took the list of students who wanted to attend the school to the Department of Education, as proof of the community’s urgent need to have a place to educate their children.

Finally, in 2004, their wish was granted. “We were proud and happy, but we had so much work to do,” said Jerzon. The first activity was to clean up the area where the school would be located. It was covered with garbage, and there was a lot of stagnant water. “We cleaned up the area, and made most of the area dry, so we could build.” Volunteers from the community went into action, and local officials, including the superintendent, provided some financial support. The parents built the school out of wooden slats and local materials, and its grand opening took place in June 2004. As hard as the parents had worked, however, the classrooms flooded when it rained, and the surrounding area was difficult to maintain clear of mud and garbage.

One day, visitors came to the school from Petron and PBSP, who were spearheading ELSA’s “Classroom Construction & Enhancement” Program. Jerzon was there to greet them, and immediately invited them in. “We have so many problems,” he told them, “and we really need your help.” Principal Arakani admitted, “I pleaded with them! We were very persistent.” The community’s determination paid off, and the following year, the three new classrooms were built, through the support of ELSA, with Petron serving as the local partner. In addition to the new chairs, desks, and other reading materials, comfort rooms were added. ELSA also provided three days of training to 30 members of the PTCA, including teachers, parents, and community members. Once again, parents cleaned up the area and provided security for the new building. “We have really worked with the children to encourage them to keep their school clean,” explains Jerzon. “After all, it’s their school. They are the real stakeholders.”

The next step? Parents plan to make the area safer, so they decided to pound some of the rocks to the ground to flatten the paths between buildings, and create a small place for the students to run around and be active. The PTCA is also continuing to search for additional funding, particularly among local businesses. They have ambitious plans for the future to raise funds to install a science lab, build a playground, and add more comfort rooms. “We haven’t been successful yet,” says Jerzon, “but we will never give up now.”



“At first they [religious leaders] were reluctant to work with us because of their negative perspective that the camp would change the attitudes of the students and would convert them into the Christian religion.”  
— Marie Sol Delantar, Youth Leadership Development Manager, Ayala Foundation

## D: Engaging Young Leaders of Mindanao

*“I want to make my people see that there is a way to live life out of poverty and clan wars; by discovering our strengths and using them to contribute to our community’s development.”*

— Ashraf Wahabi, 16, participant in the ELSA Young Leaders Camp<sup>5</sup>

**Program:** The ELSA Young Leaders Camps (EYLC) provide local youth with opportunities to learn about positive leadership traits and Muslim and Christian types of leadership through workshops, lectures, interactive activities, and discussions focused on teamwork and leadership skills. Aside from in-school youth, the camps also accommodate out-of-school youth under the Consuelo programs. In order to secure participants for the Camps, the public high schools in Cotabato City, Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur nominated their top student leaders.

**Partners:** Ayala Foundation (AFI), the Ninoy and Cory Aquino Center for Leadership, the Ramon Aboitiz Foundation; Muslim leaders, Department of Education, and local organizations including the Assisi Foundation

**Purpose:** To promote In-School Youth Engagement Programs

**Focus:** Partnering with the community to ensure religious sensitivities

From the beginning, the Ayala Foundation (AFI) staff in Cotabato City were confronted with challenges in reconciling religious-cultural issues, including gender perspectives among Muslims. These included a “no touch” policy between males and females, which would mean separate groupings during all camp activities. This situation would potentially affect the smooth preparation for the first EYLC.

Impact/Unlocking local resources

- Ayala actively engaged the Muslim elders and the DepED officials in the area in developing a culturally sensitive, religiously balanced training module for use in the youth camp. Explains Marie Sol Delantar, Youth Leadership Development Manager at the Ayala Foundation: “At first they [religious leaders] were reluctant to work with us because of their negative perspective that the camp would change the attitudes of the students and would convert them into the Christian religion. We explained to them,” she said, “that the reason we are soliciting their opinions about the modules is that we want to show the camp participants both Muslim and Christian leadership styles.”
- As part of the effort to tap into the religious community, the AFI/ELSA project Team recognized that they needed to win the trust and confidence of Ulamas/ Ustadzs and the Muslim elders from the area, so that they would endorse and support ELSA activities among the target youth groups both outside and in-school. The consultations conducted between and among AFI, Ulamas/ Ustadzs and the Muslim elders during the development of the training modules yielded positive results. The support from the school administrators and the Regional Office of DepED also helped pave

the way towards the successful conduct of the summer camps.

- Multi-cultural interfaith dialogues among the youth leaders from the ARMM focused on peace-building, nation-building and conflict resolution. AFI partnered with the Assisi Foundation in the conduct of inter-faith dialogues among the young people of Mindanao and Luzon — Muslims, Christians and indigenous youth — through “Peace Tech” video conferencing. This series of video conferences provided the youth leaders participating in the EYLC the opportunity to interact with other youth from Luzon in real time and gave them a chance to engage in dialogues which tackled the different challenges facing young people today.

Results: A more religiously sensitive youth leadership program

By working with the religious community in the design and implementation of the camp, the organizers were able to create a more inclusive environment and set of activities. To de-emphasize a participant’s religious affiliation, for example, the camp encouraged participants to choose a “Camp Name” to represent themselves. Camp activities included a cultural night, where the participants dressed in native costumes to showcase their religious-cultural heritage. The body blessing and candle ceremony were also meant to introduce all participants to the diversity of practices and traditions within the region’s religions and cultures. These activities aimed at minimizing the effects of prejudice and discrimination among the aspiring youth leaders. More than 200 youth have attended ELSA’s youth leadership training, and 90 engaged in interfaith dialogues.

Lessons Learned

AFI’s network and established linkages with other implementing partners outside of ELSA, particularly the Muslim religious community, showed that encouraging such participation can help address the religious community’s fears and anxieties. They were thus able to demonstrate there was no “plan” to convert participants to another religion — in this case from Muslim to Christian. Another key learning: a successful program is more likely to be scaled up. For example, AFI has been encouraged to expand EYLC services to cover as many youth as possible in their target area — Maguindanao and Cotabato. They plan to produce the leadership training modules on CDs so that more youth can benefit from the training. The plan includes training of teachers in conducting leadership training sessions within their classes, including homeroom and Social Studies, using multi-media tools and teaching guides which AFI will develop. To motivate students to actively participate, the leadership topics will be expressed in the form of “Learning Games” which will make use of local resources.

*By working with the religious community in the design and implementation of the camp, the organizers were able to create a more inclusive environment and set of activities.*

AFI’s network and established linkages with other implementing partners outside of ELSA, particularly the Muslim religious community, showed that encouraging such participation can help address the religious community’s fears and anxieties.

<sup>5</sup> “Choosing Servant Leadership,” *Mindanao Bulletin*, May 15-21, 2007)

Besides receiving on-the-job training, trainees participate in a “culture of peace” curriculum, which is locally designed to promote peace building skills like negotiation and conflict resolution.

### E. Promoting Job Skills through ELSA’s Integrated Technical Education Program

*“I wanted to fix my life. Revenge was all I could think about before, because my father, who is a soldier, is in prison. But now that I’m in job training, my focus has changed.”*

— Bryan Asalim, 24, ELSA ITE trainee in Basilan<sup>6</sup>

**Program:** ELSA’s Integrated Technical Education (ITE) program in Basilan offers 8-month technical training courses in the areas of automotive repair, welding, plumbing, and electrical repairs, food preparation, reflexology, and garment making. Participants also benefit from courses in reproductive health, review classes in math and literacy, enterprise development for self employment and microfinance. In addition, IYF’s life skills training is offered, and has had a positive impact on learners. Besides receiving on-the-job training, trainees participate in a “culture of peace” curriculum, which is locally designed to promote peace building skills like negotiation and conflict resolution. In 2006, six graduates of the “culture of peace” program were supported by their local governments to participate in the National Youth Parliament.

**Partners:** Nagdilaab Foundation, Consuelo Foundation, local TESDA office, local government units, community and business leaders

**Purpose:** To address the critical need for greater assistance in preparing out-of-school youth to join the job market, particularly in an area affected by conflict and violence.

Unlocking national and local resources:

- The Consuelo Foundation conducted civic engagement workshops for the ITE trainees, focusing on engaging the youth leaders and mentors in the area of project management and leadership development. The Foundation also provided Nagdilaab Foundation staff with training support in reaching out to effectively engage local partners.
- The local government unit of Isabela City offered job recruitment facilities for the trainees.
- The Mayor encouraged graduates of the food technology training to participate in food fairs in the city, where they were able to practice what they had learned in their entrepreneurship training.
- The TESDA office in Zamboanga City provided technical training and facilitated field trips to various business sites, to expose trainees to employment opportunities.
- In the town of Tuburan, the local government paid for the trainee’s dorm rent as well as transportation.
- Local officials donated a 600-square-meter lot to be used for building a technical education school in the municipality. When completed, the school will provide youth with access to a training facility. The LGUs, particularly in Tuburan, believe that the new school will reduce absenteeism and improve the quality of learning in the region.

6 Insights, Education & Livelihood Skills Alliance 2006 Annual Newsletter

### Lessons Learned

This job training program demonstrated the ability of an ELSA-supported program to attract multi-sector support and contributions. Says Espie Hupida, Project Coordinator at the Nagdilaab Foundation: “It’s important to partner with local employers and the business sector, so we can get more jobs for the trainees. We need to continue to develop partnerships to expand the program. Youth are our only hope.” Adds Luis Morales, Special Projects Manager at the Consuelo Foundation, “The business sector in the province became part of the ELSA program designing activities in Basilan. This strategy,” he said, “was seen to be significant in making the training design fit with the demands of the local industry.” Significant work remains, however, including the ongoing discrimination in hiring Christian employees over Muslim applicants.

Results of this program: about 58 percent of the more than 100 graduates here have become either employed or self-employed. Also, the development of the peace curriculum is clearly an important tool that can be used far more widely across the Mindanao region. Overall, 1,840 have attended ITE training. Over 500 graduates are now employed or self employed.

### F. Reforming Educational Policy

*“Poor education performance indicators clearly signal an urgent need for the implementation of reform policies and programs to improve Muslim learners’ access to education.”<sup>7</sup>*

— Policy Research on Access to Basic Education

The Southeast Asian Ministries of Education Organization — Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO-INNOTECH) contributed its expertise to ELSA in a number of areas. The organization is principally dedicated to identifying common and unique education challenges of Southeast Asian countries and developing innovative and technology-based solutions to address them. At the policy level, SEAMEO-INNOTECH has become a strong advocate for educational reforms within the Department of Education (DepED) — particularly regarding the need for significant improvements in the education policies affecting schools in Mindanao. A key component of this education reform strategy was to examine existing as well as proposed educational policies in the Philippines formal education system and to publish those findings for use by policymakers and educators.

**Partners:** SEAMEO-INNOTECH, the DepED, local school leaders

**Purpose:** To use research and develop strategies to impact educational policies, particularly to improve educational opportunities in the ARMM.

**Focus:** SEAMEO-INNOTECH’s report, entitled “Policy Research on Access to Basic Education for Muslim Learners,”<sup>8</sup> was part of ELSA’s broader strategy to provide quality and accessible education, especially to the poor and conflict-affected areas of Mindanao. The research examined the barriers that limit access to basic education — as experienced by Muslim

7 Policy Research on Access to Basic Education for Muslim Learners, May 2007, published by SEAMEO-INNOTECH. [Findings and recommendations based on research investigations, validation visits, and technical consultations conducted by the Center’s Research Studies Unit from May 2005 to January 2007.

8 Ibid.

“It’s important to partner with local employers and the business sector, so we can get more jobs for the trainees. We need to continue to develop partnerships to expand the program. Youth are our only hope.”

— Luis Morales,  
Special Projects  
Manager,  
Consuelo  
Foundation



Among its observations, the study found that partnerships between the schools and community-based organizations encouraged Muslim learners to stay in school and continue their education.

learners, and was designed to be used by education policymakers, legislators, school administrators and teachers to better understand how to keep Muslim learners in school. The report also serves as an important tool to push for a more responsive educational program.

**Findings of the study:** Included in the report was an array of existing Department of Education policies which were seen to affect access to quality basic education by Muslim learners. [Central and western Mindanao were covered by the study.] Major issues relating to access to education by Muslim learners were identified — including lack of essential education infrastructure such as school buildings/ classrooms, shortage of qualified teachers, extreme poverty, violence and civil unrest, cultural insensitivity, lack of support from parents, inadequate student scholarship and support services, unfriendly teaching-learning process, low presence of Department of Education mobile teachers, and governance/ administration gaps in the ARMM. Additional challenges included displacement of families because of war — which destabilizes the quality of instruction and the attendance of students to their classes.

The study’s recommendations (applying to the formal school system, the alternative learning system and the madrasah system of learning) included: improvement of education financing plans in the poorest provinces of Mindanao; expansion of free education to include high school education; inclusion of school feeding programs; introduction of the Revised Basic Education Curriculum of DepED into the madrasah system; fast-tracking of supporting materials development and deployment of madrasah teachers; and strengthening of the alternative learning system (ALS) as a learning option.

Among its observations, the study found that partnerships between the schools and community-based organizations — founded on mutual respect for cultural diversity and the concerted efforts of education stakeholders to create a conducive environment for learning — encouraged Muslim learners to stay in school and continue their education.

The results of the study were validated among the DepED officials at the national and regional levels. In order to lessen resistance to the study’s policy recommendations in the ARMM region, SEAMEO-INNOTECH involved the community leaders in the process. This strategy proved to be important, because it motivated community stakeholders who are not necessarily part of DepED to participate more meaningfully in policy reforms.

Through its work with local schools and community organizations, SEAMEO-INNOTECH more fully recognized the need to “leverage” resources and expertise to realize broader goals. Joining ELSA provided SEAMEO-INNOTECH its first opportunity to form partnerships with those in the business and corporate world. The organization’s leadership also learned that innovations in technology directed at improving the quality of education for in-school youth could also be used to enrich the life skills for out-of-school youth — with support from the local partners. “We have learned the value of efficiently sharing our resources and efforts and realizing returns which are more than the sum of the whole,” said Dr. Zenaida Domingo, formerly Head of Business Development at SEAMEO-INNOTECH.

## SECTION TWO: THE POWER OF CONVERGENCE

The previous section illustrated alliance building between national and local NGOs as a strategy to unlock resources and motivate a wide range of stakeholders to get involved in

## VOICES OF HOPE

Participants in ELSA’s ITE program in Tawi-Tawi speak of how difficult their lives were before they joined the job training sessions. “I’d be using drugs, stealing, and committing crimes,” says one participant in the refrigeration class. “You are giving us a second chance to find a new life.” Another says that he hopes to find a job overseas, “because there are no jobs here in Tawi-Tawi, and the salaries are so low.” Thanks to the job training program, however, he says, “our futures will change, and there are new possibilities.” Girls who are attending the restaurant and hospitality training are equally optimistic. “Before this program,” says one, “I just stayed at home, eating and sleeping.” Another said, “I was working in a department store, but making almost no money. Our family had no money, because my father lost his job.” Joining the program, however, had changed their lives around. One young woman said she plans to be a successful hotel manager, and to help support her family. “We are the lucky ones. Now I know how to value myself. Now I have the initiative to get up and go to school early. I had lost hope, thinking I couldn’t go back to school, but now I’m very hopeful.”

improving the educational and employment opportunities for Mindanao youth. While this strategy enabled ELSA partners to benefit large regions of the ARMM, that impact was, at times, considered “thin.” This section, on the other hand, seeks to illustrate ELSA’s more recent strategy of “programmatic convergence” — where multiple partners align with local groups in a particular geographic area or school — to more fully and effectively maximize impact on the ground. The process of how ELSA gained consensus around this strategy will be discussed in the next chapter. Here, we simply define convergence as “the offering of needed services by at least two partners working together in a community to achieve a shared vision.”

### A. “School of Peace”

*“I like the way the video uses real people to explain new concepts we encounter in our books.”*

— Umairah Gumising, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, J. Marquez Elementary School

**Program:** The J. Marquez Elementary and High School was officially named the “School for Peace” in 1997 by the Department of Education, in support of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement. It represents a combined effort of the local government and the Moro National Liberation Front to promote a “culture” of peace among the region’s youth. The community, located in an inner city neighborhood, had been a haven for vandalism, and students at the school were known to lack discipline. As part of a number of changes that took place, beginning in 1997, the school built a mosque inside the school compound, and the PTCA paid for a permanent ustadz to teach Islamic values and the Arabic Language. Teachers also received training on the culture of peace, strategic planning, and human security — as well as other activities that promoted awareness of Muslim culture. As a result of these many changes and improvements, support for the school began to grow within the community.

**Partners:** Ayala Foundation, SEAMEO-INNOTECH, UNDP, school officials

**Purpose:** To take an existing program, called “Act for Peace,” and to combine all possible

ELSA’s more recent strategy is “programmatic convergence” — where multiple partners align with local groups in a particular geographic area or school — to more fully and effectively maximize impact on the ground.

“To achieve our goals, there has to be a complementation among the various initiatives from the NGOs to the government, to other civil society organizations.”  
— Rey Tan, Deputy Program Manager, Act for Peace

ELSA-related services in one place — the J. Marquez Elementary and High School in Cotabato City. The goal was not only to make quality education accessible to teachers and students, but also provide them the opportunity to actively engage in peace building initiatives.

Results/ELSA Convergence:

- One immediate contribution of the ELSA “convergence” of purpose was enhanced technology for under-served students. While Cotabato City was not originally included as a target area of the SEAMEO-INNOTECH *text2teach* component of ELSA, a decision was made to extend the program’s geographic coverage to make that technology available to students in J. Marquez.
- Additional English lessons with a peace education theme, also supplemented with video clips, were added to the *text2teach* program for grades 5 and 6, promoting such concepts as living in harmony with nature, respect for cultural diversity, and finding inner peace. In addition to the videos, students learn about peace through songs, storytelling, and other experiential activities.
- A number of students from the school were recruited to attend ELSA’s first Young Leaders Camp in May 2006.
- AFI decided to implement its leadership training program at the school — which emphasized the positive values of youth leaders — and contributed to the re-focusing of the students’ perspectives about how they could participate in productive school and community-based activities. These students were formerly part of a widespread culture of violence in the ARMM because of the protracted war between the military and armed separatist groups.
- Another program further strengthened ELSA’s efforts. The Act for Peace Program, which has been active for nearly 10 years, promotes capacity building to promote social healing and peace building. [It is a successor program to the Government of the Philippines - United Nations Multi-Donor Programme, which operated from 2001 to 2004.] The program’s training focuses on promotion and advocacy for the Culture of Peace (COP) in mainstream venues such as schools and communities—and provides complementary activities to ELSA’s interventions in J. Marquez.

Lessons Learned

The integration of the different activities and learning opportunities (i.e. *text2teach*) between and among the ELSA partners, their beneficiaries and other community stakeholders, has strengthened and complemented existing programs that aim to develop a culture of peace among an under-served and formerly violence-prone community. It has also enhanced the teachers and students’ capacities to understand each other’s cultures, and is a good example of how multi-sector partnerships can both improve the quality of education and strengthen peace building efforts in a more sustained way. “We envision more collaborative and proactive efforts among players,” said Rey Tan, Deputy Program Manager of Act for Peace. “To achieve our goals, there has to be a complementation among the various initiatives from the NGOs to the government, to other civil society organizations.” While ELSA provides the technology and modules for the livelihood training, Act for Peace looks for and provides materials and start-up capital for the graduates of the training<sup>9</sup>.

9 Insights, Education & Livelihood Skills Alliance 2006 Annual Newsletter

B. Combining Resources to Boost a key ELSA theme: Alternative Learning System for Out-of School Youth

“My family was so poor I had to live with my grandmother and drop out of school.”  
— participant in ELSA’s Alternative Learning System

**Program:** Developing innovative alternative education delivery systems to benefit out-of-school youth in the hopes that some will return to school or gain valuable skills is a key strategy adopted by ELSA and its partners. In this instance, ELSA’s wide-ranging efforts illustrated how existing structures and strategies can be used to further expand opportunities for both in- and out-of-school youth. This example of “convergence” illustrates how multiple partners can work together to enhance a core ELSA “theme” (alternative learning opportunities) rather than a particular school or institution.

**Partners:** SEAMEO-INNOTECH, IYF, Consuelo Foundation, teachers, community leaders

**Purpose:** To further promote learning opportunities for out-of-school youth

Results/Convergence

- The Consuelo Foundation integrated academic subjects into its Life Skills Training on Youth Civic Engagement activities, giving each out-of-school learner the opportunity to prepare for the Philippine Placement Test (PEPT) and the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) exams. The results were very positive.
- ELSA’s *text2teach* program, which was originally designed for in-school children in elementary schools, is now being offered for secondary school students and out-of-school youth. Nearly 800 youth who are not part of the formal education system have benefited from this innovative technology program.
- SEAMEO-INNOTECH’s 3-month program that focuses on the core competencies prescribed by the Department of Education (DepED) for out-of-school learners at the elementary and secondary levels is gaining significant community support. Local elementary and secondary school teachers and school officials, for example, decided to open their school facilities to out-of-school youth (OSYs) who study during the weekends and week days if possible. These schools also provided volunteer teachers who serve as the instructional managers for out-of-school youth and adults.

Results

These and other alliance building efforts have greatly strengthened the alternative learning opportunities for out-of-school youth in Mindanao. To date, more than 7,300 learners have completed these alternative learning and non-formal education programs.

This example demonstrates the benefits of pooling resources and expertise from ELSA partners and the Department of Education, as well as the potential to sustain ELSA-initiated programs for both in-school and out-of-school youth. *(continued on page 35)*

This example of “convergence” illustrates how multiple partners can work together to enhance a core ELSA “theme” (alternative learning opportunities) rather than a particular school or institution.



## CASE STUDY II

### TAKING A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM TO SCALE: A MODEL STRATEGY

*“Before, we just had photos and pictures of science experiments, and the children were bored. Now with the video clips, our students are inspired to come to class every day.”*

— Teacher participating in the *text2teach* program

One of the most innovative ELSA-supported programs seeking to boost learning among under-served youth in the Philippines is the *text2teach* initiative. Originally designed to support the country’s national curriculum objectives as defined by the Department of Education, it was implemented in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade science classes in more than 80 schools, beginning in 2005.

The program was highly popular with the students. “We like science now, it’s fun,” said one sixth grader. “It gives us information and it’s modern,” says another. The teachers were most positive about how the program changed the learning atmosphere in the classroom. “This program is a piece of magic,” said Norma Sinsuat, the principal of Cotabato City Pilot Elementary School in Mindanao — one of the first schools to use the program. “Science has become exciting, and the classrooms are filled with entertainment and learning.” The program produced higher test scores and in some participating schools, higher enrollment.

#### Expanded Learning Opportunities

Over the years, SEAMEO-INNOTECH has played a pivotal role in implementing *text2teach*, through partnerships with Ayala Foundation, Globe Telecom, PMSI Dream Satellite, Chikka Asia, and others. SEAMEO-INNOTECH also works closely with the local schools, the Department of Education, and community and parent groups. During its work to support *text2teach*, SEAMEO collaborated and strengthened its linkages with the school administrators, the Regional officers of the Department of Education in Regions 9 and 12, ARMM community leaders, and local government units.

Under ELSA, *text2teach* expanded its reach, its subject matter, and the groups of young people it would benefit.

- Through ELSA, the program scaled up its original target of 80 schools to reach an additional 72,000 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in 122 public elementary schools in the ARMM and regions 9 and 12. By June 2007, *text2teach* has benefited 100,000 youth.
- In 2005, the program expanded its content to include not only science but English and math as well. Working together with DepED, ELSA has now added another component to *text2teach* — by mainstreaming peace education in both formal and non-formal education for grades 5 and 6. This initiative was in response to Executive Order 570, which mandates DepED to promote peace themes throughout the educational system. These lessons are particularly relevant in the ARMM and surrounding regions, which are prone to armed conflicts between the government and separatists groups and armed rebels, as well as family feuds. The peace education curriculum — which will be used in the 2007-2008 school year — will promote such concepts as living in harmony with nature, respect for cultural diversity, and finding one’s inner peace.
- While the program was originally designed as a classroom-based initiative, more recently, under ELSA, the program was expanded to benefit 8,000 out-of-school youth from non-

formal education systems in the ARMM and Region 9.

- Teachers also benefited from the program. More than 720 of those participating in the *text2teach* program have benefited from training on effective teaching skills and instructional strategies as well as the use of ITC in teaching and learning. As explained by Dr. Domingo, “We wanted them to get out of the classroom and explore their surroundings, to work interactively in the classroom, and to really challenge their students.”

#### Results

A study conducted by the University of the Philippines and released in May 2007<sup>10</sup> demonstrates higher learning gains in English and Science among pupils exposed to ELSA’s *text2teach* technology. With more than 2,800 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students participating in the study, dramatically higher post-test scores and learning gains were shown for those students using *text2teach* over those students who received traditional instruction. In Science and English, learning gains went up more than 20 points. “Learning shoots up in *text2teach*, and based on this evaluation study, it further boosts learning gains among pupils in poor learning environments,” according to Dr. Josefina Natividad at the UP Demographic Research and Development Foundation. The research recommendation was to expand the program among other areas in Mindanao.

#### Public Recognition

The impact of *text2teach* has not gone unnoticed. The program gained international recognition by being selected as a finalist in the Stockholm Challenge 2006, an international, nonprofit initiative that recognizes information and communication technology (ICT) projects from around the world that are having a real impact on local communities. That same year, *text2teach* gained further recognition when it bested more than 50 entries to win the Asian Corporate Social Responsibility Award, under the Support and Improvement of Education category.

10 Summative Evaluation of the ELSA text2teach Project: Final Report, by Josefina N. Natividad, Sc.D., published by the University of the Philippines Demographic Research Foundation, 2007.

### C. Providing Capacity Building for Graduates of Youth Leadership Camps

*“In a conflict-ridden country like ours, training the youth to become pro-active citizens is as essential as a formal peace agreement.”*

— Simon Mossesgeld, Ninoy and Cory Aquino Center for Leadership

#### Program: ELSA Youth Leadership Camps

**Partners:** Ayala Foundation spearheaded the in-school Youth Leadership Engagement Program for ELSA, with growing support from the Consuelo Foundation. The implementing of the ELSA Young Leaders Camps was done in cooperation with two local groups — the Ninoy and Cory Aquino Center for Leadership and the Ramon Aboitiz Foundation, with support from school administrators and PTCAs.

**Purpose:** to strengthen the leadership qualities of youth who had attended a Young Leaders Camp by providing capacity building training to its graduates.

ELSA initiatives within a particular school or locality can become the spark that ignites community support and cooperation for education programs in the targeted areas.

## Convergence

- In the ongoing search for a more meaningful engagement of the EYLC graduates in community work, AFI sought the expertise of Consuelo Foundation in providing the graduates of EYLC with follow up activities that included basic training in project management, computer and internet skills, and opportunities for civic engagement. In this partnership, Consuelo provided the training module for out-of-school children and youth, and AFI adapted the training methodology so that it would be relevant to in-school youth as well. During the training, the EYLC graduates identified the most current needs of their schools and developed strategies to address them.
- Ayala Foundation, through its own funds, financed the implementation of small-scale community projects which the graduates pursued in partnership with their school. Projects ranged from fence renovation and building garbage bins at their schools to enhancing the school library. This strategy gave young leaders the opportunity to apply what they had learned from the project management training. It also gained community support from local government officials, teachers, and agencies such as UNICEF.
- Since the funds for the project were small, the school administrators and the PTCAs contributed portions of the expenses for young leaders to complete their projects.
- AFI's partnership with the local NGOs led to much needed support for the community engagement program of EYLC alumni. These organizations provided an Internship Program for the graduates of the leadership training where selected graduates were fielded in NGO projects.

## Results

To date, out of the more than 200 high school students and out-of-school youth leaders who have attended ELSA's Youth Leadership Training, five Alumni Clusters of youth leaders in three key municipalities have been created to spearhead local leadership trainings.

## OVERALL CONCLUSIONS: THE IMPACT OF MULTI-SECTOR ALLIANCES

The concrete integration of ELSA programs into local community initiatives shows that the community stakeholders can be mobilized if they are guided by simple but suitable interventions to improve access to education and job training programs among their children and youth — and that they themselves can mobilize local resources and technical expertise.

Ayala Foundation, Inc., Consuelo Foundation, Inc., Petron Foundation, Philippine Business for Social Progress and SEAMEO-INNOTECH have invested more than their resources in ELSA. They have also made the project one of their institutional priorities. In return, they also accomplished more than they expected. "Once you start something, it is forever your commitment — since education does not end; it is always a changing process," said Dr. Zenaida Domingo, former Business Development Head for SEAMEO-INNOTECH.

ELSA initiatives within a particular school or locality can become the spark that ignites community support and cooperation for education programs in the targeted areas — thus creating a "convergence" of resources and energy that continues to ripple out into the community. "Formal and informal relationships with the people and their leaders, plus our transparency of intentions and goodwill...were the reasons they [local partners] chose to work with us," says Tito Rivera, ELSA Secretariat Manager.



PHOTO BY CHRISTY MACY

*Bringing together local leaders in business and government has been an integral part of the ELSA strategy. This group represents the many local organizations that contribute to ELSA's ITE program in Basilan.*





PHOTO BY JAN MARISTELL

Expanding job training opportunities for under-served youth has been a significant goal for ELSA. Training is offered in auto mechanics, electronics, hotel management, and refrigeration and air conditioning repair.

## The Evolution of a Multi-Sector Partnership

This chapter describes the forging of the alliance and how it evolved over the past two and a half years.

### COMBINING THE STRENGTHS AND TALENTS OF LEADING NGOS

ELSA represents an alliance of like-minded organizations committed to using their expertise and sharing their resources on a scale that could improve the lives and prospects of children and youth in Mindanao. While the ELSA partners shared the same objectives and the belief in employing area-specific forms of interventions, they differed in the types of services they provided and the geographic areas in which they had worked.

The International Youth Foundation was the designated lead organization because of its global expertise in alliance building and program management. The Ayala Foundation, which serves as ELSA's National Secretariat, took the lead in implementing the leadership program for in-school youth. The Consuelo Foundation brought in a wealth of experience in helping out-of-school youth to the ELSA Project. It already had a wide array of programs and projects that offered an extensive network of local partnerships with civil society organizations. The Petron Foundation (PF) led ELSA's efforts to provide school structures and important support mechanisms for education, including the "young scholars" program. The Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), an umbrella organization of Philippine business companies that fosters partnerships to promote social responsibility, concentrated on improving the capacity of PTCAs so that they could better support school programs for their children in a more sustainable manner. The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization — Regional Center for Educational Innovations and Technology (SEAMEO-INNOTECH) contributed its expertise in developing innovative technology-based solutions to special educational needs. In addition to leading the implementation of *text2teach*, SEAMEO-INNOTECH focused on the education reform component of the project, developing a strong advocacy role for reforms within the Department of Education aimed at improving educational opportunities and access among Mindanao youth.

"We knew that each of us would bring specific projects into the alliance and we were bonded by the belief that together we could do something positive to improve the quality of education for the children of Mindanao."

— Felicitas Rixhon,  
former  
Chairperson,  
ELSA Steering  
Committee

### BUILDING THE ALLIANCE

In describing the pre-ELSA conditions, Felicitas (Fely) Rixhon, former Chairperson of the ELSA Steering Committee, notes the strength of the existing partnerships among the various ELSA founding members. "We knew that each of us would bring specific projects into the alliance," she said, "and we were bonded by the belief that together we could do something positive to improve the quality of education for the children of Mindanao." Each of the Founding partners had years of expertise and a wealth of field experience and organizational resources (human and financial) that complemented the others. So it seemed logical that each would contribute their own "projects" to respond to USAID's priorities.

Dr. Zenaida Domingo, Head of the Business Development office at SEAMEO-INNOTECH at the time, agrees that a great deal of synergy among the groups already existed, particularly a shared commitment to expanding educational opportunities. That shared experience, it was commonly agreed, was a significant advantage to the fledgling alliance. While a



number of other NGOs were interested in working together on the USAID proposal, it was the current members of ELSA, according to Rixhon, “who were the only ones who decided to push through with the project conceptualization, and it was IYF that consolidated the proposal.”

While this was a talented and powerful group, the bond between the organizations was based as much on personal friendships and mutual agendas as on strategic focus, as many Alliance members had worked together previously. For example, AFI, PBSP, and the Consuelo Foundation had been part of another alliance called Pagtabangan BASULTA, working together with community-based and Manila-based organizations in Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi to address social, economic, environmental and governance issues in the three islands. Even so, the “informal” linkage between these groups created through ELSA would take time to coalesce into a strategic alliance around a unified agenda.

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE ELSA ALLIANCE

Over the years, ELSA evolved from initially working individually to impact the intermediary goals of the project to later turning towards the strategy of convergence. This new approach recognizes that the ELSA partnership is larger, and has a potentially far greater impact, than simply the sum of its parts.

### Moving toward “One Heart, One Dream, One Team”

One of the attributes of the Alliance was its flat or horizontal decision-making process. This was due to both the organizational structure and to the mutual respect that the various participants had for each other’s work. At meetings, for example, each member would take turns around the table, listing its particular commitment or contribution to solve a certain problem.

The Alliance members, as established organizations, not only had the funds but also the expertise to implement effective interventions individually. So when ELSA was established, they committed to deliver the project outputs as contained in the agreement with USAID, but without close integration with the other Alliance members. As a result, they did not work as a cohesive group. During the course of the project, however, members of the Alliance were faced with the challenge of projecting themselves as a single entity that could elevate individual organizational agendas to an alliance level, thus strengthening the Alliance’s capacity to mobilize resources and advocate positive change within Mindanao’s education sector. Says one ELSA partner: “When people outside of the Alliance asked about the *text2teach* component, for example, the other ELSA partners used to wait for SEAMEO-INNOTECH to respond. Later, however, we realized that we should know more about what each of us was doing. Our active participation in ELSA-related activities slowly opened up the opportunity to learn more about each other’s programs, and to see how this knowledge could impact on our own contributions to the project.”

Now, in its third year, ELSA has emerged to reflect this new collective “identity” — described by members as “One Heart, One Dream, One Team.” This process took both time and experience to develop, as well as some encouragement from USAID and members within the Alliance. The new theme reflects a common agreement that all members bring

additional “leverage” not limited to in-cash or in-kind contributions, but also, including, their extensive networks of local partners, best practices, and successful track records on project implementation.

### A focus on the “Convergence” Strategy

Before the end of its first year, ELSA partners recognized the need for greater coordination and strategic planning. As a result, the strategy of “convergence” emerged. According to Mario Deriquito, the Director at the Center for Social Development at the Ayala Foundation, the convergence of interests and plans takes place when different groups agree upon a common framework of intervention, based on a common understanding of needs. “With complementation — you don’t alter the original program, you add to it, find the gaps, and fill them,” he explains. “With convergence, we go beyond complementation to develop a framework that focuses our efforts both programmatically and geographically.” In this spirit of harnessing individual expertise for greater impact, ELSA partners developed six basic “convergence” features that taken together form its working principles:

- A common vision, which takes into account individual and mutual goals of each member and those of the Alliance as a whole
- Strong commitment toward a win-win arrangement among all parties
- Mutual trust, confidence, and transparency
- Shared responsibility for attaining results
- Clearly defined procedures to build consensus and make decisions
- Effective communication and openness for sharing information
- An equitable system for sharing of resources, benefits and public recognition

This strategy was seen as the first step in forming a true alliance. Alliance partners began to realize that participation in ELSA could help each member improve their delivery of services to target beneficiaries and that the impact of integrated programming would be deeper than if one partner were acting alone. In the process of programmatic convergence, ELSA members set aside their respective “territorial” niches and organizational agendas in order to attain the goals of the alliance and mobilize greater resources. The result: fewer targets, deeper impact.

Ray Dean Salvosa, the current Chair of the ELSA Steering Committee, emphasizes the fact that the convergence strategy within ELSA evolved rather slowly, as a natural consequence in an ongoing process. He said that at the onset, Alliance members did not have a common understanding about how they would go about developing convergence, and even USAID was not initially clear about it. However, explains Ms. Rixhon, “USAID, in one of our initial meetings during the first year, posed the question about how the members of the Alliance could work together more efficiently. That question,” she said, “triggered thoughts among Alliance members about the convergence path.”

Some ELSA members argue that even if a “convergence” strategy had been promoted in the beginning, it would still have taken a year or so for the partners to be able to coalesce in ways that would promote greater coordination and deeper focus. During the early exchange of materials and strategies, for example, the ELSA partners began to realize that each of their approaches could be further enriched by incorporating the learnings and resources of others. At that point, they began to open up an exchange of technologies and

“With convergence, we go beyond complementation to develop a framework that focuses our efforts both programmatically and geographically.”

— Mario Deriquito, Director, Center for Social Development, Ayala Foundation



There is also a clear recognition of the importance of continually building local capacity among the various foundations and associations in the area of management and planning.

other resources. Adds Dr. Zenaida Domingo, “We had already been sharing materials in previous projects when the relationships between and among us was what we might call “loose.” Even at that stage, she said, “we had already been regularly discussing the different requirements of the project and identifying and sharing the resources from each of the partner organizations to attain the four key outcomes.”

**New Strategy Supported by USAID**

“Now that they are a part of ELSA, the individual members of the Alliance have a different way of looking at the world and their relationship with it,” says Dr. Thomas Kral, Senior Education Advisor, USAID/Philippines. Kral believes that ELSA will deepen its impact through a more active convergence strategy. Noting that ELSA was a “great fit” for USAID’s goals to improve access to education and employment for the under-served young people of Mindanao, Kral says that “Together, we’ve made some real progress, particularly in the way this incredibly diverse group of NGOs, local government, education, and community leaders has been able to pull together their resources and expertise to benefit these young people.” The convergence strategy, he believes, “is a major breakthrough.” Kral also believes that ELSA members need to think in terms of thematic as well as geographic convergence, such as employability, youth leadership, and literacy — as another aspect in implementing the strategy.

**The Result: Unlocking Resources through Leveraging**

“The secret of our success,” says Consuelo’s Ray Dean Salvosa, “is that we work with local implementers who are trusted by the community, who know the culture, and who have researched the needs in Mindanao.” This grassroots involvement, in turn, supports the “leveraging” of additional resources from both the leading partners and the local community. So far, Alliance members have raised more than US\$4.8 million in funding and in-kind contributions to support projects on the ground — more than matching the original US\$4.2 million USAID grant.

The previous chapter described a sampling of how ELSA has leveraged a remarkably high level of contributions from both national and local organizations. Here are others. One of many examples of financial leveraging: the original ELSA funding to build a new school building in one community did not cover the actual costs. The Petron Foundation and Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) paid the difference. Other cash donations included the provision of audio-visual equipment for schools, delivery of school desks by a local company, support for the supplemental feeding program from a local foundation, and contributions to the ELSA scholars program.

Examples of in-kind support are also numerous. Many local Parent Teacher and Community Associations (PTCAs), for instance, have committed to paint and renovate classrooms and provide security for construction sites and equipment. The Alliance also encourages the sharing and/or distribution of ELSA-generated teaching materials or life skills modules with local schools and programs. A number of local Departments of Education have offered their public elementary schools as sites for out-of-school youth to participate in alternative learning classes. In Basilan, a local public official donated space that will now be used to house a technical education school. The list goes on.

The hope, already realized in some areas, is that the strategy of convergence will serve to leverage even greater financial and in-kind contributions to the overall goals of the Alliance. When local governments, businesses, and district offices of the Department of Education see how the convergence of attention and resources on a select number of schools in a particular municipality can generate greater impact, they will be more likely to actively contribute their own resources to the project.

There is also a clear recognition of the importance of continually building local capacity among the various foundations and associations in the area of management and planning. For example, while it is generally recognized that local entities, including PTCAs and private companies, often provide financial and “in kind” contributions — they don’t always use those contributions in strategic ways. Eventually, such local entities need to take on a greater role in managing the allocation of new resources so that they have the greatest impact, and ELSA can help them do that. ELSA members also believe there is greater capacity, particularly among the local companies, to invest in education and job training initiatives if they are excited about what’s taking place in their communities through the Alliance.

*“Now that they are a part of ELSA, the individual members of the Alliance have a different way of looking at the world and their relationship with it.”*

— Thomas Kral, Senior Education Advisor, USAID/Philippines



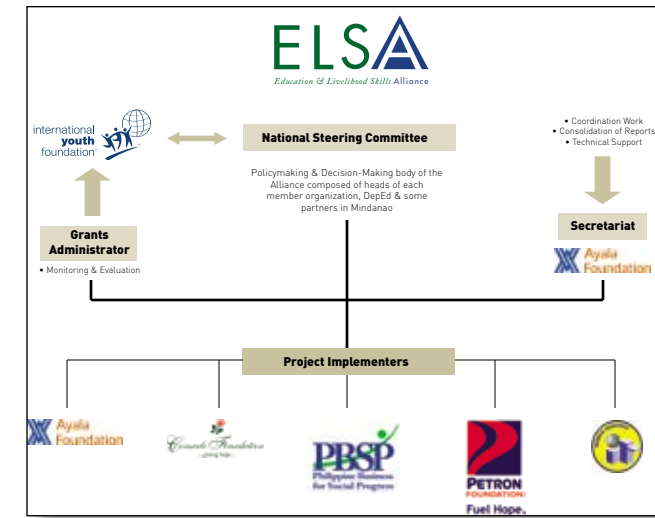


PHOTO BY CHRISTY MACY

These young people are participating in a community project as part of their ELSA-supported leadership training.

## Roles and Responsibilities: A Model That Works

This chapter presents ELSA's established management and implementation structure, including the Secretariat, the Steering committee, and ELSA founding partners. This section also includes descriptions of USAID's role in the EQuALLS project, as well as the ongoing responsibilities undertaken by the International Youth Foundation.



"I did not observe any conflict at all because the ELSA members always try to achieve a 'win-win' situation."

— Dr. Zenaida Domingo, Deputy Chief of Party, ELSA

### THE STEERING COMMITTEE

The National Steering Committee (SC) is the policy-making and decision-making body that governs the management and operations of the ELSA programs. It is composed of representatives from the member organizations and other key stakeholders. The SC coordinates the work of the Alliance, consolidates reports, and offers technical support. It likewise acts as the lens through which all project activities are scrutinized, and ensures that the project meets its benchmarks. The SC conducts regular monthly meetings where ELSA participants share experiences and collectively make decisions to address project concerns and directions. "It (the Steering Committee) was also the body within ELSA that provided the Secretariat action points like the convergence activities and resource mobilization on the ground," adds Fely Rixhon, the former Chair of the Steering Committee.

Because the SC meets only once a month, a Technical Working Group was formed to be responsive to the more daily and weekly needs of implementing this complex and multi-pronged program.

The collegial environment within the SC allowed for the cultivation of strong personal relationships and respect between and among the ELSA partners. The opportunity helped bind the institutional relationships among them which in turn helped facilitate joint decision-making and the delivery of ELSA services in the field. Shares Dr. Zenaida Domingo: "I did not observe any conflict at all because the ELSA members always try to achieve a 'win-win' situation. Even in the sharing of modules and other resources and our work beyond ELSA," she says, "we are committed to help each other."



## THE SECRETARIAT

One of the founding members, the Ayala Foundation, provides the Secretariat functions for ELSA, which includes the regular convening of the Steering Committee Meetings, the implementation of evaluation activities and the facilitation of field visits of IYF/ USAID officers and staff. The Secretariat participates in the Chief of Party meetings for EQuALLS, in the absence of an IYF representative in the country. The Secretariat also provides the body and all ELSA partners with ongoing administrative and logistical support in implementing their programs.

The thematic focus “One Heart, One Dream, One Team” came about when the Secretariat observed that Alliance members were moving toward a natural convergence, and began to package themselves as one group. When programmatic convergence began to take place within ELSA, the Secretariat played a key role in mapping and profiling targeted schools, looking at their needs, and matching ELSA’s interventions with resources — as well as proposing other candidate schools to receive integrated services from the project. The Secretariat, for example, collected data from the different ELSA target schools about their resource mobilization activities, the sources of their funds, and their fundraising capacities, and used that data to enhance resource mobilization activities.

Another Secretariat priority is to encourage mobilization of resources within the target communities of ELSA to support sustainability. Ayala Foundation offered its “Children’s Hour” funds (money raised through employee contributions) to Mindanao-based organizations (preferably ELSA partners) to start up the process. This initiative contributed to the development and sustainability of local alliances with ELSA partners.

And finally, the task of process documentation and the conduct of all ELSA communication activities — including the development, packaging and printing of all ELSA publications and materials — also falls under the Secretariat’s functions. A team of writers and designers has produced highly effective annual reports and e-news flashes, in order to publicize the work of the Alliance to a broad national and international audience.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION FUNCTIONS

ELSA did not prescribe a uniform monitoring and evaluation tool — which is often a regular feature of large and complex projects such as this one. Accomplishments were reported by each of the partners using their own evaluation tools per their agreement with each other, the Secretariat and IYF. The use of a uniform reporting format (Quarterly Report Forms) for these accomplishments, however, allowed for easy interpretation of results by IYF and USAID.

The Secretariat was designated to collate all the programmatic details of the project partners’ activities which they regularly reported to IYF. That process ensured that all action points discussed during SC meetings were consistently followed through and efficiently carried out by the parties concerned

The creative ways in which the Secretariat handled the relatively simple monitoring plans within ELSA has allowed the Steering Committee, IYF and the USAID to have a clear picture of project developments. The regular monthly meetings of the Steering Committee, on

the other hand, provided a venue where problems were discussed and could be responded to immediately. The direction setting capabilities and monitoring functions of the Steering Committee provided ELSA with a clear direction. This advantage was complemented by the efficient conduct of logistical and administrative support from the Secretariat. The combination proved to be an effective way of managing ELSA from the upper level of decision-making (Steering Committee) down to the ground level (project sites).

## THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FOUNDATION AND ELSA

The International Youth Foundation (IYF), as Chief of Party, has a range of responsibilities to carry out within the ELSA initiative. The lead organization in convening and organizing the Alliance, IYF’s responsibilities include grant management, program oversight and review, monitoring and evaluation reporting, and best practices and knowledge sharing.

Bi-monthly visits to the Philippines by Chief of Party and Project Director Jack Boyson and other members of the IYF team included face-to-face interactions with the Secretariat, the Steering Committee and other members of the Alliance, as well as site visits in Mindanao. These visits, in addition to sometimes daily e-mail and telephone communications, enabled IYF to keep abreast of project developments and to provide technical expertise when needed. A clear delineation of roles and the adherence to those roles within the ELSA structure has allowed for efficient operations and the timely delivery of all project outputs. However, some questions arose among a number of ELSA partners around whether a full-time physical presence by IYF would have benefited the program and facilitated greater guidance and direction.

This past year, IYF has shifted from a more “virtual” management status to on-site management. In response to a need for greater engagement on the ground, IYF appointed Dr. Zenaida Domingo as its Deputy Chief of Party and Program Director.

This decision was made not only to ensure that an IYF representative could serve a day-to-day oversight function for the ELSA operations — but also as a way to enhance the program by enlisting an individual with experience in the area of youth employment, as well as a deep understanding of the program’s operations at both the steering committee and ground level.

## USAID AND EQUALLS WITH ELSA

The work of ELSA is being implemented in large part through funding from the United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQuALLS) project. The strategic objective guiding the EQuALLS project aims to “Increase access to quality education and livelihood skills in selected areas, particularly to those affected by conflict and poverty” in Mindanao. The project focuses on solving disparities in educational opportunities, which include providing livelihood training programs for out-of-school youth in three regions in Mindanao.

ELSA’s participation under the EQuALLS “umbrella” includes attendance at meetings and participation in capacity-building activities conducted by USAID for EQuALLS partners. Initially, the Secretariat represented the ELSA partners at the regular Chief of Party (COP)

meetings. The process provides ELSA the opportunity to be informed about the activities of the other EQuALLS partners and to report on how its projects are contributing to the broader goal of EQuALLS.

USAID — represented by Tom Kral, Senior Education Advisor at USAID Philippines and Cognizant Technical Officer for ELSA — has consistently participated in the alliance’s activities, including Steering Committee meetings, evaluation activities, and field visits. Kral notes USAID’s role in promoting effective, strategic approaches, including the convergence strategy. “Though ELSA is the largest of the private sector alliances participating in EQuALLS, it is one of several different alliances. We are looking more and more now at how the different alliances in EQuALLS can bring their efforts together and ‘convergence’ is the big term. We want to see that the efforts of ELSA partners complement or reinforce the efforts of the other EQuALLS partners.” Looking closely at the quality of complementation between and among EQuALLS partners, Kral admits that convergence is not yet fully realized.

*The work of ELSA is being implemented in large part through funding from USAID’s EQuALLS project. The strategic objective guiding the EQuALLS project aims to “Increase access to quality education and livelihood skills in selected areas, particularly to those affected by conflict and poverty” in Mindanao.*



PHOTO BY JACK BOYSON

*Mindanao is one of the most impoverished regions in the Philippines, where low employment, lack of educational opportunities, and ongoing conflict have made it difficult for young people to be successful in school and in the workplace.*





PHOTO BY NANCY SHEPPARD

*As part of its plan to improve educational opportunities, ELSA provided 29 schools with science lab equipment and supported 7,600 students with scholarships.*

## Lessons and Best Practices: A Practical Guide

This chapter explores the many lessons and ongoing learnings that have been gained over the past two and a half years, as ELSA has emerged as a strong model for how to build an effective multi-sector, multi-stakeholder alliance. As part of this analysis, a number of “best practices” have emerged [relating both to the structure and procedures of the Alliance] as well as effective strategies — particularly the more recent focus on “convergence” — to mobilize local support for the programs. Also included here is a description of over-arching themes that support and facilitate the conduct of all project activities. Many of the following lessons learned have been the focus of discussions during steering committee meetings, annual evaluations, and observed anecdotes during monitoring visits. We are hopeful that these observations will help guide and strengthen the next phase of ELSA.

ELSA partners now realize that the lack of strategic focus at the beginning of the project resulted in less initial impact.

### LESSONS LEARNED FROM ELSA ACTIVITIES IN MINDANAO

#### Alliance Building

- 1) **The quality and strength of partner organizations can determine the success of an alliance.** Organizational capacity, expertise, and complementary strengths are vital to a successful multi-stakeholder alliance. The fact that some of the leading NGOs in the Philippines, all of whom had expertise in the education and technology fields and had already worked together, decided to jointly implement the ELSA program was a key factor in its impact and growth over the years. “Our [ELSA’s] strength lies in the strength of our individual members, who are very stable institutions, and well known in their fields,” says Mario Deriquito, Director, Center for Social Development, Ayala Foundation.
- 2) **Create a common vision at the beginning of the project to strengthen impact.** While a great deal has been accomplished, ELSA partners now realize that the lack of strategic focus at the beginning of the project resulted in less initial impact. The initial strategy was for each NGO to develop and implement its own interventions in Mindanao. In the beginning, perhaps in their eagerness to launch activities, the partners did not sit down together to map out an overall plan and come to consensus around how to move forward in a coordinated way. Even after two years, there is often not full coordination between the various efforts, and convergence is not yet being fully implemented.
- 3) **Structure the alliance to ensure regular feedback from the field and establish mechanisms for monitoring and problem solving.** There is general consensus that the structure of ELSA, with the Steering Committee, the Secretariat, as well as the roles and responsibilities carried out by IYF, USAID, and the many local implementing partners, has worked well, and could be a model for similar alliances in the future. At the national level, the structure promotes collaborative decision making and provides the opportunity for partners to discuss issues and arrive at a consensus. The appointment of Deputy Chief of Party in 2007 was clearly seen as a positive move, providing IYF with a full-time representative on the ground that strengthens its management role during ELSA’s expansion.

- 4) **Replicate the collaborative work of the national alliance at the local level.** Just as collaboration is critical among the national alliance members, that same spirit of collaboration, planning, and coordination must take place at the local level as well. Both levels of partnership are needed to unlock additional resources. The ELSA model directs national organizations (primarily based in Manila) to work with local implementing partners in Mindanao to carry out the programs and ensure their quality. Developing local public/private alliances helps sustain and build upon the progress being made beyond the life of USAID funding. This network of local NGOs also helps major donors like USAID to be more effective on the ground. Says USAID's Tom Kral: "These [local] partners have the contacts and the know-how to get things done; they can provide ongoing monitoring and evaluation — something we cannot do if we relied solely on staffing at the national level."
- 5) **Maintain effective communication and coordination among partners.** Particularly when there are numerous partners working at both the national and local levels, it is imperative to nurture and maintain ongoing communications among the collaborating groups, and to make sure that local entities on the ground are kept informed of all activities. Concerns have been raised by USAID and others that due to the large number of ELSA activities, communications sometimes break down, and some partners as well as local stakeholders may not be adequately informed about developments on the ground.

## ENHANCING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT/ SELF-EMPLOYMENT FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH

*"Discipline is as important as wanting to learn. This is better than being idle at home, I get to earn a salary."*

— Jerry, 23, a participant in ELSA's job training program who is now employed at an auto repair shop

Jerry is one of 250,000 young people who have dropped out of school in Tawi-Tawi. Today, thanks to ELSA's Integrated Technical Education (ITE) program, he gained the confidence as well as the practical skills that helped him get a job. For youth like Jerry who have dropped out of school, ELSA provides alternative learning programs that are helping them either find employment or return to the classroom. "The youth here want to get a job, and are willing to work hard," says Espie Hupida, Project Director at Nagdilaab Foundation who runs an ITE program in neighboring Basilan.<sup>11</sup> "They don't want to have anything to do with the conflict and the violence; they want to be part of the solution, all they need is a chance." So far, more than 1,200 out-of-school youth have either graduated or are attending these integrated technical education courses across the region, and more than 500 have already found jobs or are self employed.

### ELSA Supports and Expands Job Training Initiative

The ITE program in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, is run by the Mahardika Institute of Technology, with support from ELSA. The young people here face significant challenges in getting the training

they need to join the workforce. Mahardika offers them that opportunity. Participants attend two-month training sessions that equip them with skills in mechanical technology, electronics, hotel and restaurant management, and refrigeration and air conditioning repair. Says Sambas J. Hassan, Director of the Institute, "We need to support peace and development in this region, and while we offer skills training to out-of-school youth, we are different, because we also incorporate the 'soft skills.'" Those segments of the training include reproductive health, skills for life, community service training, labor law, basic literacy, business planning, and a course on the "culture of peace."

The target population for these programs is not limited to only those who have dropped out of school but also includes the sons and daughters of combatants and deportees. "Given that there are 250,000 out-of-school youth in Tawi-Tawi, we are gratified that ELSA is helping us expand this program," says Hassan. He underscores, however, that there is a desperate need that is still not being met, both in terms of the number of recruits they can afford to train and the quality of training they are able to provide. "We need to expand; we need new facilities; we need better trained trainers and we have to be able to sustain these efforts after the ELSA funds come to an end," he says.

### Engaging the Community

The ELSA-supported job training program at MIT is a model for engaging the many stakeholders in the community, in all sectors.

- The Philippine Overseas Employment Agency, for example, looks for employers who are seeking workers who fit the skills of the program participants, invites potential employees to visit the training sites, and helps the young people get their passports, if they decide to look for jobs overseas.
- The Tawi-Tawi Chamber of Commerce provides the job training in hotel management and works with the business community to find internship opportunities or employment for some of the graduates.
- TESDA, the government job training office, provides competence-based curricula for the training as well as the assessments and certificates.
- The private sector, including Shell, Tatu, local hotels, and auto repair shops, are key to providing employment for the graduates.

While most parents are unable to contribute money to the program, struggling as they are to survive in extreme poverty, they fully appreciate the program and its efforts to train and employ local youth. However, they express frustration that there are not more opportunities. Says one father, "I have three children — and they want to enroll in this program, but there are no more slots. We need more resources!" Funding remains inadequate to meet the demand. As Hassan explains, "The insurgency is strong because there is so much poverty here, and so many young people drop out of school. It's urgent that we reach these young people, because this program is giving children of combatants an alternative to violence."

<sup>11</sup> *Insights, Education & Livelihood Skills Alliance 2006 Annual Newsletter*



## LEARNINGS AROUND CREATING RESULTS THROUGH ALLIANCE BUILDING:

- 1) **Community engagement is essential for success of any alliance.** Community engagement and “buy in” is the central element of any successful national/local partnership, and essential in terms of mobilizing and “unlocking” local resources, support, and expertise. ELSA’s partnerships with effective grassroots organizations helped to identify the urgent needs of the beneficiaries and provided valuable local participation in addressing such needs. The decision to bring together ELSA founding partners has facilitated the project entry in the targeted sites because many of them already had the local structures, working systems, and relationships within their existing programs.

The local partners of the Alliance also helped spur the introduction of innovative strategies to address the educational problems in the target sites. The expertise around technology in education programs for both in-school and out-of-school youth among the local partners, for example, complemented by the resources introduced by each of the ELSA founding partners, has helped build a strong foundation for the achievement of project goals and objectives.

- 2) **Capacity building in local governance must be a top priority.** While local community support continues to be the most essential piece of a successful alliance, not all NGOs have the expertise or capacity to carry out large programs. For example, ELSA found that there were few Mindanao-based partners who had the operational and financial capacity to successfully manage a USAID project. Helping existing community institutions perform their roles — through capacity building trainings and one-on-one support, complemented and sustained the work. These training sessions benefited the local government units, school boards, school administrators, teachers and particularly the Parents Teachers Community Associations (PTCAs). ELSA helped communities take responsibility for the education of their children by working with them to analyze problems and mobilize local resources to address them.
- 3) **Sustainability demands a number of realities on the ground.** Strong community ownership is one of the core conditions for sustaining a program beyond its original funding. Communities must also have the financial capacity and expertise to raise local funds to continue the project. If local organizations and individuals, including parents and teachers, see the impact of a program on their children and community, then they will be more willing to work to keep it going. Thus public advocacy — and the knowledge and experience to do it effectively — is another key element for sustainability. One example: 1% of the property tax in the Philippines is earmarked for education. EQuALLS and USAID plan to work closely with local organizations to increase their advocacy on this issue — and to make sure that money is used strategically to improve the quality of the local schools.
- 4) **Non-educational interventions, coupled with education-based initiatives, can positively impact achievement levels and school attendance.** Poor health, malnutrition, remote locations of schools and low levels of literacy all need to be addressed to ensure the success of educational interventions. Construction of schools or teacher training, alone, does not guarantee success. Addressing these gaps may determine if a child will progress from one grade to the next and finish

school. Under ELSA, for example, the distribution of medical kits and orientation of school nurses in identifying simple illnesses and providing basic medical attention resulted in lower drop-out rates — due to early detection and treatment. Students who were de-wormed and immunized, and who participated in a supplemental feeding program run by ELSA, were in school 80% of the time. The nurses who administered the feeding program also looked after the health of the students in the feeding program. (ELSA learned that during Ramadan, the program had to be changed so food would be taken home as food rations. Again, this encouraged students to go to school regularly, minimized absenteeism and reduced drop-out rates.) Scholarship programs — that included provision of school supplies, and uniforms, along with feeding programs — have enhanced school attendance and achievement. Scholarships for students from poor families, for instance, resulted in 3% of the assisted students topping their classes.

- 5) **Selection criteria for programs must fit local conditions.** Often, program selection criteria is developed before a program is launched, and must be altered later on to ensure it is appropriate and meaningful to the local context. For example, related to ELSA, it became necessary to change the criteria in the selection of youth interested in taking the accreditation and evaluation review courses — when two classes with 57 learners had to be closed due to participants’ lack of basic literacy. Similarly, only 285 of 440 teachers assisted for their Licensure Examinations actually took the exam, because of their inability to submit or process their application and/or inability to afford the out-of-pocket expenses. As a result, ELSA revised the criteria for prioritizing who to assist in the program.
- 6) **Life skills are critical to success both in and out of school.** Out-of-school youth carry with them the burdens and conflicts of their parents, as well as their own lack of skills. Life skills are critical to their social and economic development and their capacity to seize opportunities. ELSA’s inclusion of life skills in its various programs underscores its belief that the aim of education goes beyond academic studies to enable young people to learn how to learn, how to relate to others within and outside their community, and how to develop leadership qualities and live in peace. The current challenge, faced by life skills programs in general, is how to measure their impact. Particularly in the case of ELSA, it is a challenge to determine how such training contributes to meeting the EQuALLS goal of providing access to basic education.
- 7) **Promoting cultural and religious sensitivity is vital to a successful program.** Sensitivity to cultural and religious needs must be exercised in designing programs for youth living in diverse communities. Gaining the religious community’s support and participation is essential. As a result of ELSA’s efforts in Mindanao, for example, it was possible to avoid the Muslim community’s perception that the youth training program was aimed at promoting Christian values. Words, symbols, and songs need to be neutral in order to effectively reach out and gain acceptance among the different religious communities.
- 8) **Job training must directly connect with local demand to be effective.** Job training programs — such as ELSA’s integrated technical education courses — must be developed in partnership with key stakeholders, including the education community, private sector, and local government, to be effective. The program requires

Scholarship programs — that included provision of school supplies, and uniforms, along with feeding programs — have enhanced school attendance and achievement.

ELSA’s partnerships with effective grassroots organizations helped to identify the urgent needs of the beneficiaries and provided valuable local participation in addressing such needs.

support from the private sector (to facilitate the matching of skills offered with the demand of local industry). They also need the support of local stakeholders such as the Department of Education and TESDA (for more adaptable curricula), the local government units (for other support mechanisms for the trainees) and the business groups (for employment opportunities). The inclusion of these partners in all phases of program implementation allows local structures, including the business sector, to match the skills developed among the trainees with the demands of the local industry. Another learning: it is better to deepen course offerings and assist fewer youth, than spread assistance thinly over many municipalities. In this regard, local government units can play a particularly pivotal role in improving and deepening the impact of the training.

However, even the most effective job training and job placement initiative cannot generate sufficient numbers of jobs for impoverished communities such as Mindanao. Keeping skilled workers in a community requires sufficient employment opportunities — which can only be realized if and when there exists a vibrant local economy.

- 9) **Civic engagement and leadership training help sustain gains.** Education is not limited to what is learned in school, but continues into the community where learners can explore and apply their new knowledge and skills through civic engagement projects. Leadership training courses, camps and the promotion of civic engagement and volunteer community programs all provide youth with flexible and creative ways to apply their new skills. The ELSA experience demonstrated that such opportunities have helped young people work better with adults and community leaders — providing them with experience in expressing their ideas and helping them become better citizens. Teaching youth leaders how to use computers and become familiar with information technology — as well as practical leadership skills — also helps students feel valued and empowered. Such camps should also ensure they teach relevant skills. It was recognized that making a “culture of peace” a central theme of all ELSA leadership activities was necessary due to ongoing violence and social unrest in the region.

- 10) **Education-based technology can play a substantial role in improving learning.** Academic performance can improve through the strategic use of technology, including the installation of science labs, audio visual equipment, and access to technology-based lesson plans. Science concepts and principles are more easily assimilated and students became more interested in learning when science laboratories and equipment are provided. As a result of ELSA-supported *text2teach* program, which involved educational videos in the classroom, more than 72,000 students saw improvements in math, science, and English. According to a recent report, “significant higher learning gains” were made by participants in all three subjects. In the ELSA supported reading camps — attended by more than 400 students — about 85% improved reading skills to one level higher than before the camp. Other outcomes included greater self confidence, more interaction in class, fewer absences, and improved grades. Installation of science labs, practical arts and audio visual equipment also greatly helped the teachers to be more effective in the classroom.

- 11) **Teachers need effective training to improve the quality of education.** Teacher training, whether it is learning how to use technology in the classroom, maintaining that equipment, or improving the effectiveness of their teaching strategies, must be a top priority. It became clear in the ELSA projects, for example, that teachers needed assistance in learning how to use basic audio visual equipment before they could effectively use new technology. Many of the teachers who participated in ELSA-supported efforts like *text2teach* were at first unable to operate audio visual machines and projectors. Teacher training and capacity building — which is a core ELSA-related activity — was a key element in the program’s success. A significant part of the *text2teach* program was to go beyond the technical aspects to improve teaching strategies, with a focus on interactive discussions in the classroom.

- 12) **Successful programs demand follow up.** When scaling up a program, particular attention is needed to ensure that the quality of training remains high. Sometimes that may mean changing the way the training sessions are conducted. ELSA, for example, found that it was more effective to hold the Instructional Managers trainings on weekends rather than weekdays. Maintaining quality also means providing mechanisms for post training support such as the help desk for *text2teach* or the alumni clusters of the young leaders camps. Counseling sessions and committed mentors are key to follow-up work.

- 13) **Vibrant alliances need to tap into innovative strategies.** It is not enough to carry out already proven programs for young people. It is also important to search for new and innovative ways to reach new goals and target different populations. One of ELSA’s most innovative programs that had the greatest impact is *text2teach*. ELSA partners also used innovative strategies in their work with out-of-school youth, by finding new ways for them to become positively engaged in community service through volunteer programs. ELSA has used school buildings on weekends for its non-formal education programs for out-of-school youth. ELSA has also been particularly innovative in the way it has modified existing curricula to fit a particular segment of the student population, such as integrating peace themes within its academic content.

- 14) **Never stop searching for additional partners.** While partnership building is a time-consuming and at times exhausting process, the job is never finished. Particularly when a program has very ambitious goals — as in the case of ELSA — it is important to keep recruiting new partners at both the national and local levels. Keep in mind that while financial support it always needed, so is a good range of expertise and experience. Try to identify gaps in knowledge and expertise and fill them. In the case of ELSA, for example, USAID has a very ambitious agenda for phase II of EQuALLS, and it is encouraging new partners to join. The success of such Alliances is dependent upon the ongoing ability to leverage additional support. That leveraging is ever more crucial when the goal is to expand and deepen existing programs.

When scaling up a program, particular attention is needed to ensure that the quality of training remains high.

Education is not limited to what is learned in school, but continues into the community where learners can explore and apply their new knowledge and skills through civic engagement projects.



## ELSA'S CROSS CUTTING THEMES

### On Peace Building

ELSA recognizes that one of its indirect objectives is to enhance peace building efforts among the young people living in Mindanao's post-conflict communities. Its youth leadership programs, for example, offer youth beneficiaries a chance to speak out on war, peace, discrimination, and other matters that directly affect them. The inter-faith dialogues between and among Christians, Muslims and Indigenous youth provide them the opportunities to interact and learn about different beliefs, customs and traditions. Civic engagement activities among the leadership graduates also help them to realize their potential as active members of society who can share their talents and skills to bring about positive change.

### On Gender and Cultural Sensitivity

Another theme reflected across many of ELSA's activities is close attention to gender and cultural sensitivity. All major players in ELSA — USAID/ EQuALLS, IYF, the Steering Committee, Alliance members, the Secretariat and ELSA's local partners — have consistently adopted culturally sensitive practices. Books for distribution are carefully screened to ensure that they do not contain material that is contrary to religious and cultural beliefs of the target communities. Adherence to religious and cultural practices of the tri-people of Mindanao was also consciously practiced in the different activities of the project. ELSA also sought to ensure that there are always equal opportunities for both genders — whether it related to scholarships, feeding programs, or trainings for students or teachers. In this regard, ELSA, has developed its own Gender Statement.

These cross-cutting practices demonstrated to ELSA that a deep respect for the culture of its beneficiaries and a focus on targets that contribute to peace building efforts will enhance its interaction with local stakeholders and help the project realize its goals.

***“The insurgency is strong because there is so much poverty here, and so many young people drop out of school. It’s urgent that we reach these young people, because this program is giving children of combatants an alternative to violence.”***

— Sambas J. Hassan, Director of the Mahardika Institute of Technology, Tawi-Tawi



PHOTO BY CHRISTY MACY

*ELSA recognized the need to promote a message of peace and understanding among young people in Mindanao. Here a group of students display art work they have created in their “culture of peace” class.*

## ELSA Accomplishments to Date

(AS OF JUNE 30, 2007)

### Community-based Learning Opportunities in School-less and Conflict-affected Areas

#### A. Building Education Infrastructure in Mindanao

**81** classrooms renovated and repaired; **63** new classrooms constructed; **184** repainted  
**15,516** chairs and desks distributed  
**15,430** books distributed in 45 schools  
**13,000** students de-wormed and immunized and participating in special supplemental feeding program  
**334** school nurses supplied with medical kits  
**33** schools provided with teaching facilities and equipment, and **13** schools provided with **85** computers  
**29** schools equipped with science lab equipment and **36** schools equipped with AV facilities  
**7,655** students received scholarships  
**3,130** non- or slow-reader students attended remedial reading camps or sessions  
**630** teachers assisted to their Licensure Exam  
**35** PTCAs capable of managing education improvement projects, through 46 courses, reaching **858** participants  
**567** teachers and **131** school administrators gained improved instructional skills  
**6** local school boards trained to address education issues

#### B. Alternative Learning System for Non-formal Education

**1,842** learners enrolled in A&E program, with **1680** completing the program  
**1,177** passed the PEPT/A&E tests  
**594** passers re-enrolled in formal school  
**22** instructional managers enhanced their teaching competencies

#### C. Engaging Young Leaders of Mindanao (In-school youth)

**60** high school student leaders attended leadership programs  
**170** (plus 31 OSY) attended Youth Leadership Training  
**11** young leaders participated in one week volunteer work with NGOs  
**5** alumni chapters organized  
**6** interfaith dialogues organized involving 90 youth leaders  
**93** high school students receive training and acquired skills in project management  
**3** learning sessions on computer and internet used conducted and attended by **70** young leaders  
**9** volunteer projects funded and implemented  
**5** leadership training institutions partnered with ELSA provided training and capacity building for young leaders

#### (Non-formal and Out-of-School Youth)

**80** students trained to lead in training and participate in civic engagement projects with their peers  
**849** ITE students trained and implemented civic engagement projects  
**22** staff trained in youth civic engagement  
**1,680** students in 60 groups trained and implemented civic engagement projects  
**50** indigenous youth participated in Youth Leadership Training Program

### Improving Teaching Capacity for Math, Science, and Education

#### Increasing Access to Basic Non-formal Education Using Innovative Technology

**113** audio-visual packages in DVD distributed  
**117** DVD players distributed  
**88** Alternative Learning system instructional managers trained and monitored  
**7,375** learners participated in alternative learning system programs  
**736** teachers gained knowledge and skills in use of technology and **124** school heads oriented on project technology  
**122** schools participated in *text2teach* program  
**100,000** students in grades 5 and 6 performed better in Science, Math and English  
**490** lesson plans developed  
**129** video packages and **144** audio packages produced

### Promoting the Reintegration of Out-of-School Youth into Peaceful, Productive Economy

#### Enhancing Opportunities for Employment/Self Employment among Out-of-school Youth

**1,840** enrolled in the Integrated Technical Education (ITE) program  
**849** trainees graduated  
**502** ITE graduates are either employed or self employed

### Reforming Education Policy

- Equivalency matrix of standards for school accreditation developed
- Report published of education policies and their implementation with recommendations for improvement
- Meetings with Departments of Education staff to discuss report



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**Parwisa Sajili**, 4th grade teacher, Hji. Yunos Jumdain Elementary School, Bangao  
**Dr. Thomas Kral**, Senior Education Advisor, USAID/Philippines



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“If I hadn’t enrolled in this program,  
I’d be using drugs, stealing, and committing crimes.  
You are giving us a second chance to find a new life.”

— Participant, ELSA’s ITE program

## INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FOUNDATION

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