

***Textbook Count* and Civil Society Participation:
Effecting System Reforms in the Department of Education**

By Grace Leung

**A case study written for the
Government Watch
Ateneo School of Government**

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The Department of Education (DepEd) is the largest agency of the Philippine government, both in terms of personnel and budget allocation. As of March 2004, it administers a total of 41,388 schools, with a total of 456,317 teachers and 40,000 non-teaching personnel nationwide. Although only three per cent of its total budget of roughly a hundred billion pesos a year¹ is allotted for the construction of infrastructure, the purchase of furniture, textbooks and other instructional materials², the amount spent for these procurements is sizeable.

In the early 1990s, reports³ of ghost deliveries, under-deliveries, long delays in delivery, poor physical quality of textbooks, and unqualified bidders winning bids hounded the department. Social Weather Station (SWS) surveys then indicated that DepEd was considered one of the five most corrupt agencies in the country.

Clearly, system-wide reforms were needed: to prevent and combat corruption, and to restore the people's faith in the department. One such reform was *Textbook Count*.

Background

In October 2002, then Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus initiated *Textbook Count*, a program that sought to address concerns on the transparency, accountability and efficiency of the department's procurement process for textbooks. Conceptualized and spearheaded by Undersecretary Juan Miguel Luz, the program targeted the involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the complete textbook procurement cycle, from bidding to production to final delivery.

The timing could not have been better. The November 2002 Textbook Procurement was the single largest procurement in the history of the Department of Education.⁴ A total of 37 million textbooks and teachers' manuals for all ten year levels of elementary and secondary education, amounting to P1.3 billion,

¹ DepEd budget for the year 2005 is P111 billion and for 2004, P108.9 billion.

² "Reflections on Institutional Reform at the Department of Education," in *The SGV Review*. Juan Miguel Luz. March 2004.

³ Although published in 1996, *Robbed*, a book by the Philippine Center on Investigative Journalism on ghost deliveries and misappropriated DepEd funds, is still widely quoted by the media.

⁴ *Textbook Count 2003: Final Report of the National Textbook Delivery Program of 2003*, Office of the Undersecretary for Finance and Administration; prepared by the Instructional Materials Council Secretariat (IMCS), September 2004.

were awarded to different suppliers, both local and foreign. The immensity of the purchase made ensuring the on-time delivery of the right quantity and quality of textbooks to their intended destinations even more imperative.

DepEd did not only lack the personnel to effectively monitor all deliveries, it also lacked the resources to fund monitoring activities. There was a need to tap people outside DepEd, preferably CSOs that could be accepted by the public as fair and impartial third-party monitors. The extent of the nationwide distribution, comprising of 5,500 delivery points, required not just the help of one CSO, but of a consortium of CSOs that would be willing and able to volunteer their participation.

The CSO monitors were expected to take part in the different stages of the procurement process: (1) as observers during the pre-bid conference, bidding proper, and post-qualification, (2) as members of the quality control inspection team⁵ in warehouses and printing presses, and (3) as on-the-spot monitors during actual deliveries.

CSO Monitoring Activities

Stage of Procurement Process	CSO Activity
1. Bidding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe and ensure the transparency of the pre-bid conference • Be signatories in the abstract of bid during bid opening • Observe and ensure the transparency of the bidding proper • Observe in the conduct of content evaluation
2. Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect the quantity and quality of textbooks, and ensure that they are according to contract specifications • May recommend the rejection of books that do not pass quality standards
3. Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help in the counting and inspection of books, making sure that the right quantity and quality were delivered on time • Record notable incidents and observations in the Inspection and Acceptance Report (IAR), which will be submitted to DepEd • Sign the IAR's Third Party Monitor section. With this signature, the division need not inspect the deliveries to the district and the high schools. This aids in the processing of documents, which in turn helps the supplier collect payment within a shorter period of time.

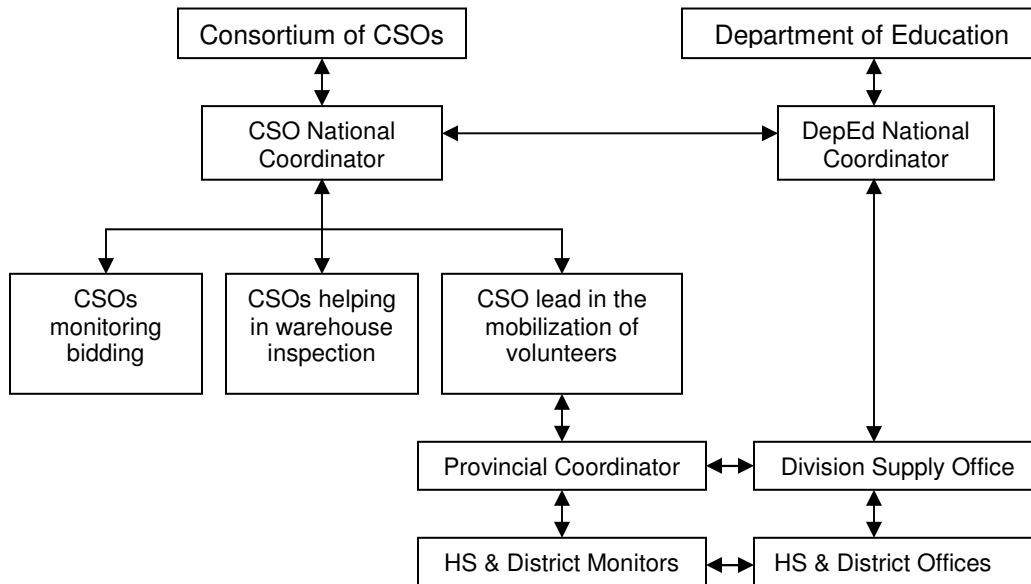
⁵ The Quality Control Inspection team is headed by the DepEd's Instructional Materials Council Secretariat (IMCS).

Tapping the Right People

Undersecretary Luz approached the Ateneo School of Government's (ASG) G-Watch⁶ to organize and coordinate the CSOs' monitoring activities in the textbook delivery program. G-Watch, also known as Government Watch, was a logical choice for the program because the group was set up to track public expenditure and monitor the implementation of government programs.

Under the guidance of ASG Dean Henedina Razon-Abad⁷ and with support from The Asia Foundation⁸, G-Watch accepted the formidable task of putting together and coordinating the consortium of CSOs. As national coordinator, they not only served as the liaison between DepEd and the consortium, they also came up with systems that would ensure the smooth participation of CSOs in the different aspects of program implementation.

Coordination Scheme between DepEd and the Consortium of CSOs



In 2003, *Textbook Count 1* was launched. The National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL)⁹, banking on their extensive network of volunteers nationwide and extensive experience in monitoring elections, took the lead in the

⁶ In 2000-2003, G-Watch was one of the projects of the Philippine Governance Forum, which was a collaborative program of the Ateneo School of Government, Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs, and the United Nations Development Programme.

⁷ Dean Razon-Abad is now Representative of the Lone District of Batanes.

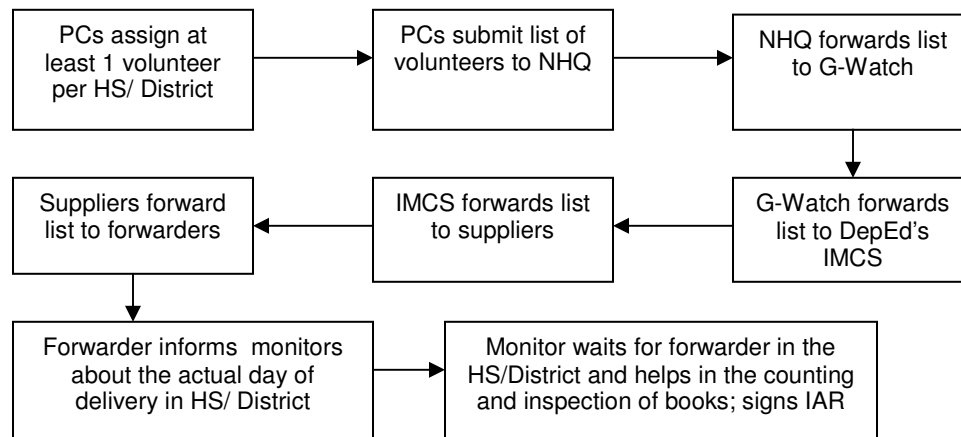
⁸ The Asia Foundation provided funds for coordination work, conduct of briefing-orientations, process documentation and evaluation.

⁹ Mr Telibert Laoc was the Namfrel Executive Director who consolidated the nationwide participation of Namfrel chapters in the *Textbook Count 1*.

mobilization of volunteers¹⁰. This meant that NAMFREL would facilitate the civil society operations at the district- and high school-level or the actual delivery sites.

The following year, another procurement of 14 million textbooks, teacher’s manuals and lesson guides, which cost P660 million, was made. G-Watch had to rework the process undertaken in the first round of the *Textbook Count* and invite more CSOs to join the consortium¹¹ to improve monitoring work. As the start of the delivery schedule coincided with the elections, where NAMFREL played a key role, G-Watch tapped the Boy Scouts of the Philippines (BSP) and the Girl Scouts of the Philippines (GSP) to take the lead in mobilizing volunteers for *Textbook Count 2*. BSP’s and GSP’s considerable manpower and presence in virtually every school was an asset to the endeavor, and having young people and children involved was also thought to be a deterrent to corruption. BSP and GSP’s organizational structure, with their National Headquarters (NHQ) and Councils, which served as provincial coordinators (PCs), also facilitated the process of fielding volunteers.

Process of Fielding Volunteers



In these two rounds, what was required of the volunteers was far from passive involvement. Because of the impact of their tasks on the outcome of the process, they were asked to undergo orientation on the various activities that required their participation via briefing documents, meetings, and training workshops. The “duties and responsibilities of the volunteer monitor” was also programmatically spelled out.¹²

¹⁰ See Appendix A-1

¹¹ See Appendix A-2

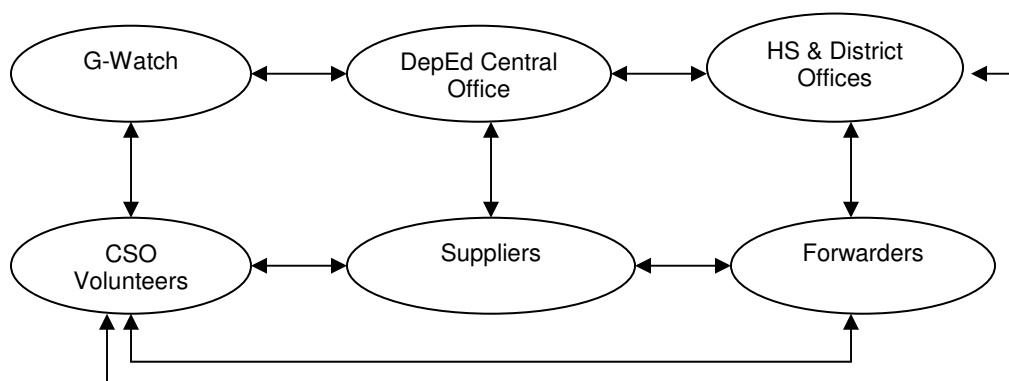
¹² See Appendix B. The *Duties and Responsibilities of the Volunteer Monitor* was formulated by Ma. Christina Pascual, who served as Namfrel Program Director during *Textbook Count 1*.

Shifting Paradigms and Redefining Relationships

DepEd realized early on that the success of the program and initiating change lies in being able to break free from traditional paradigms borne out of procedures, both official and unofficial, that have been observed throughout the years. Since all stakeholders already had years of existing relationships with each other, they were all used to doing things in certain ways—ways that may not necessarily be to the best interest of the department and the textbook delivery program.

For *Textbook Count* to work, any of the relationships between any two groups of stakeholders had to be in good terms. Everyone had to be on the same page and working towards common goals. As the different groups worked with one another, their experiences resulted in learnings that further refined how they related to one another. Communication lines were consistently open so that proactive and reactive adjustments based on learnings and experiences could be made throughout the process.

Matrix of Relationships between Stakeholders



Most of the adjustments that had to be made were due to the critical involvement of the CSO volunteers. The new Government Procurement Reform Act (GPRA)¹³ set the environment for civil society and private sector participation in public procurement. DepEd took advantage of this provision in the GPRA to lend credibility to its multi-million peso procurement by opening its doors to third-party observers. The civil society, notably G-Watch and Procurement Watch, in turn, welcomed the opportunity and its presence undeniably helped strengthen the process. The involvement of CSOs in this stage met no resistance from the suppliers because they did not have to make any adjustments to accommodate the observers.

However, when it came to warehouse inspection, some adjustments had to be made during the first *Textbook Count* as minor resistance was felt from some

¹³ Republic Act 9184 was passed in January 2003; its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) was approved in 8 October 2003.

suppliers who perceived that some CSO monitors have not had sufficient training in quality inspection. In time, however, CSO monitors were accepted by suppliers as part of the DepEd inspection team.

The greatest paradigm shift had to happen with the actual deliveries. Before the inception of *Textbook Count*, the suppliers dictated when deliveries will be made to their designated sites, as long as they were completed within 150 days. In order for CSO volunteers to be present when the books arrive, it was necessary that they can predict the date of deliveries. To do this, DepEd decided to follow a general rule: all publishers had to go to the same province or city within the same range of dates, and a predictable delivery schedule has to be submitted by every supplier.

The suppliers resisted, maintaining that this was an unrealistic demand and would entail additional cost. DepEd asserted that as customers, they had the right to dictate the terms of delivery. Eventually, suppliers agreed to comply, becoming more responsive to DepEd's needs and respecting the latter's position as client.

In redefining their relationship with the suppliers, strong leadership and political will were key factors. Usec. Luz, along with IMCS Director Socorro Pilor and Procurement Service Director Aida Carpentero stood firm and fast in dealing with suppliers and asserting their rights as customers. Working relationships, even with previously established "givens", can and should evolve to become most advantageous to those who stand most to lose.

Suppliers were not the only ones adjusting to the changes. Local DepEd personnel were at first, wary of CSO monitors, due to lack of awareness or understanding of the latter's true role. There were false perceptions that the monitors were there to check on DepEd personnel and not the books, which led to a defensive stance and resulted in lack of enthusiasm in working with the CSO volunteers.¹⁴ These perceptions were corrected, and by the time *Textbook Count 2* was implemented, the suppliers, local DepEd personnel, and even the CSO monitors had adjusted to their now clearly defined roles.

The Power of Information

What facilitated the adjustment to change? Effective information dissemination was a major factor. In most instances of resistance, the problem was either the lack of information, or the lack of proper understanding of the information.

According to Usec. Luz, prior to *Textbook Count*, the textbook recipients apparently did not receive a list of the titles and the quantity that they were supposed to receive. Thousands of letters were individually sent to the school

¹⁴ Some cases of problematic encounters with CSO volunteers were brought to the attention of the CSO national coordinator and the DepEd National Office. See Appendix C for accounts of these cases and how they were addressed.

principals and property custodians, and having these lists at hand empowered them to make informed judgment on whether the deliveries were correct and sufficient. Thousands of reference materials were also sent to the CSO volunteers to guide them in their monitoring work.

In *Textbook Count 1*, DepEd local personnel's initial mistrust of the CSO monitors stemmed from false perceptions of why the monitors were there in the first place. The roles and responsibilities of all parties were made clear in DepEd Memorandum 162, which was distributed to DepEd personnel. Those who encountered conflicts in the process professed to not receiving the memorandum, or not reading the memo despite having received it, or not understanding it despite having read it. Meetings were convened, and after roles were clarified, smoother working relationships were achieved.

In *Textbook Count 2*, when NAMFREL came in at a later time¹⁵ to participate as CSO monitors, the BSP and the GSP were not prepared to accommodate them. Again, all that were needed were meetings and instructions to define and manage expectations.

Making Changes for the Better

The immensity of the coverage and the complexity of dealing with different groups of people have led the participants to continually assess what mistakes were being made, and what things were being done right.

Consultative workshops done midstream and post-evaluation workshops after every *Textbook Count* provided all those involved in the program a venue to air their concerns, identify problems, and propose solutions. G-Watch observed that dialogues in the context of common agenda and shared program objectives lead easily to positive action on findings and recommendations. Its pre-requisite, however, is the effort and investment to bring people together in a dialogue.

Despite the numerous monitoring tasks and variety of working relationships that the program's stakeholders have to contend with, the simplicity and clarity of the ultimate goal—to make sure that the right number of quality textbooks reach intended recipients on time—made it easy to spot where adjustments have to be made. The entire process was dynamic and flexible, and corrections could easily be made to achieve quantifiable and attainable benefits.

Vast improvements were made on *Textbook Count 2* based on learnings from *Textbook Count 1*. According to Dir. Pilor, information dissemination to DepEd local personnel was more organized, and was thus more effective. Since this was the second year of the program, awareness levels were higher. The dynamics between CSOs and suppliers, and CSOs and local DepEd personnel improved because they now saw how they could be of help to one another (e.g., suppliers could get payments processed faster with CSO's signature on the IAR).

¹⁵ NAMFREL joined the *Textbook Count 2* right after the elections.

Having done it before, G-Watch was also more confident in mapping out and orchestrating the consortium's activities.

Admittedly though, the program is still evolving as new challenges come up.

One weak link in the chain of relationships is the one with local forwarders. Common problems involving forwarders include lack of coordination with the recipients regarding actual delivery schedule. And, in their personal interest to save time, they, at times, leave deliveries with unauthorized receiving personnel. Since they are accountable only to the suppliers who hired them, DepEd has no jurisdiction over their conduct. DepEd's Procurement Service, which prepares the bid documents, could look into including a Memorandum of Agreement between supplier and forwarder as one of the supplier's requirements. Although the said MOA would be a transaction between supplier and forwarder, DepEd's possession of such a document heightens the supplier's and forwarder's sense of accountability. This will somehow pull the forwarder into the web of relationships committed to making the program work.

Another area for improvement is inspection at the warehouse and printing press. Ideally, whenever defective copies are found, follow-up visits should be scheduled in order to check if the corrections were made. This has yet to be achieved; a more efficient implementation of inspection of revisions is needed.

Scheduling continues to be a concern, as many deliveries are still made before or after the agreed dates, thus the possibility of not having the authorized receiving personnel and CSO monitor present.

Despite DepEd's faster processing of documents for suppliers' payments, there are still delays in the release of money. Although the release is handled by another government agency¹⁶, suppliers continue to perceive this as a weakness in the DepEd system.

Beyond Counting

With the help of the CSO volunteers, there was marked improvement in each step of the procurement process.

Warehouse inspection became a more thorough exercise. During *Textbook Count 1*, there were two instances wherein 100,000 textbooks were rejected because of poor binding.¹⁷ In *Textbook Count 2*, rejected textbooks were only within a range of 6 to 74 pieces, with the most common types of defects being poor binding, defective folding, and printing defects like uneven density, ink scum or blots and hickeys.

Majority of the volunteers' participation was during the delivery stage. Through on-the-spot monitoring, they became the DepEd Central Office's eyes

¹⁶ Release of payments is handled by the Department of Budget (DBM)

¹⁷ *Government Watch: Citizens' Action for Good Governance*, a powerpoint presentation by Dondon Parafina, G-Watch, Ateneo School of Government. Not dated.

and ears in the field. They helped ensure that the correct number of quality textbooks reached the right place on time. Their own documentations of the deliveries also helped validate DepEd documentation. Together, the different organizations of the consortium were able to field volunteers to track deliveries in 60 provinces for *Textbook Count 1*, and 85% of the total deliveries in all provinces for *Textbook Count 2*.

Despite its name, the program has achieved reforms way beyond coming up with the right count of textbooks.

In terms of measurable results, DepEd reports¹⁸ the following achievements of *Textbook Count*. First, textbook prices have been reduced to an average price of P35.14, in contrast to the P90 average price per textbook prior to the department's adoption of international bidding procedures. Technical specifications for textbooks, such as the paper stock and binding, were improved. Procurement time, which used to be 24 months from bid opening to final deliveries, has been cut down to 12 months. This meant that textbooks were in classrooms within a schoolyear of ordering. Lastly, the cycle of payments was completed within a much shorter period, from the previous three years to 15 months.

Less tangible, but even more important, are changes in mindset. It has forced, out of sheer necessity, all the stakeholders—DepEd personnel, CSOs, suppliers, end users—to clarify their roles, renew their commitments, and respect their relationships with one another. To accommodate the program, system changes have been effectively implemented. The importance of proactive information dissemination has been rediscovered. Dialogues provided venues for grievances, as well as for commendations and sharing of best practices.

An unplanned but welcome benefit from the project is the change in public perception. Print advertisements and radio commercials that aimed to create awareness about the project and encourage volunteerism also generated publicity and impressed upon the public that the department was doing something to battle corruption and effect change. Even stronger publicity for the program was the commendation given by Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo, citing in particular the involvement of Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts as “inspiring”, and the program as one that can be adopted by other government agencies as well¹⁹. Evidence of the effect of these on the public perception is a 2004 SWS Survey that now lists the Department of Education as one of top 5 government agencies determined to combat corruption.

The program owes its success to two key factors: DepEd's leadership and the passionate involvement of the civil society.

¹⁸ *Textbook Count 2003: Final Report on the National Textbook Delivery Program of 2003*, Office of the Undersecretary for Finance and Administration; prepared by the Instructional Materials Council Secretariat (IMCS), September 2004.

¹⁹ “Ombudsman wants boy, girl scouts to check AFP corruption”, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 28 October 2004, p.A1.

DepEd, in taking the initiative to seek CSO assistance and propose a program that will require system-wide reforms, showed sincerity and determination in making change happen. It also showed that they recognized the vital role that the wider public can play in enforcing and eventually institutionalizing reforms.

Civil society, often accused of whining and complaining without resorting to positive action, need to be shown how they can help. G-Watch's Dondon Parafina, who took the lead in coordinating the consortium, notes that those government agencies who wish to engage CSOs must take the initiative and provide programs through which the people can channel their desire to contribute to reforms. If methods for participation are in place, government agencies may be surprised to find that there is no dearth in willing and able volunteers, especially since reforms will ultimately benefit them.

DepEd's projects in particular benefit the very stakeholders that they involved as "third party". It may be even argued to a point that as most of the CSO volunteers are parents of students, or in the GSP's and BSP's case, students themselves, *Textbook Count* is primarily a project that is theirs to own. Owning the project here means making vigilance and constructive participation part of their lives. As one Scout Leader points out, the real value of the exercise for them is imparting in the youth the value of guarding against corruption. Hopefully, this will remain with them until they become decision-makers.

Institutionalizing Reform

In an Annenberg Institute study²⁰ on public engagement, the purpose of involving the civil society in government endeavors was summed up as follows:

The fundamental purpose of any public engagement initiative is to channel a community's concerns, apathy or anger into informed and constructive action. It calls upon dozens to reinvest in their public institutions, not only their money, but their time, energy and commitment as well.

As a public engagement initiative, *Textbook Count* achieves its purpose. Faced with controversies and accusations, the Department of Education challenged the civil society to join them in breaking down existing corruption and making the procurement process less vulnerable. The Asia Foundation, which provided support to the program, says: "Textbook count has demonstrated that as long as reforms are carried out by a resolute and committed leadership from within and complemented by key stakeholders inside and outside of government, positive change is possible."²¹

²⁰ *Parents for Public Schools Inc, Reinventing Relationships: Constituency Building and Advocacy in Schools*, Kelly Allin Butler, 1999.

²¹ Message from The Asia Foundation, delivered by Ms. Vivien Suerte-Cortez for the *Textbook Count 2 Post-Delivery Evaluation and Workshop*, 1 March 2005.

Hopefully, the movement is catching fire. If Ombudsman Marcelo's commendation is any indication, the spirit that spurs change can be infectious. Procurement by other government agencies like the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Department of Health have been cited to possibly follow the *Textbook Count* model. Already, the Bureau of Internal Revenue has involved the Boy Scouts in their "pay your taxes" campaign.

What remains now is for the Department of Education, with the help of the civil society, to institutionalize *Textbook Count*. As a bureaucracy, DepEd needs to put this down on paper, so that the project's continuity can be assured despite changes in the department's leadership²². Another way of institutionalizing has already started: stakeholders have seen the value of the program, and will insist on its existence for as long as necessary. DepEd and CSOs need to once more work together and ensure that what they have built together will benefit more and more in years to come.

²² New Education Secretary Florencio Abad already pledged support for the continuation of the program. He called it a model of governance and anti-corruption initiatives in a remark during the *Textbook Count 2 Post-Delivery Evaluation and Workshop*, 1 March 2005.

APPENDIX A
Textbook Count Consortium Members

Appendix A-1

Textbook Count 1: Consortium Members
Association of Ministers and Ministries in Nueva Ecija
Caucus on Development NGO Network
Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government
Konsyensyang Pilipino
National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections
National Secretariat for Social Action, Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines
Philippine Governance Forum (G-Watch, Budget Advocacy Project and TAN OpTeam)
Procurement Watch Inc.

Appendix A-2

Textbook Count 2: Consortium Members
Alliance of Concerned Teachers
Alliance of Volunteer Educators
Association of Ministers and Ministries in Nueva Ecija
Ateneo School of Government
Boy Scouts of the Philippines
Caucus of Development NGO Networks
Civil Society Network for Education Reforms, Inc.
Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government
Girl Scouts of the Philippines
Kapatiran Kaunlaran Foundation, Inc.
Konsensyang Pilipino
National Citizens Movement for Free Elections
Naga City People's Council
Negros Center for People Empowerment and Rural Development, Inc.
Procurement Watch, Inc.
Social Watch Visayas
Ten Outstanding Boy Scouts of the Philippines Association
Transparency and Accountability Network

APPENDIX B

Duties and Responsibilities of Volunteer Monitors

Before Delivery of Textbooks, the volunteer:

- 1) introduces himself/herself and presents appropriate identification to the DepEd elementary district office supervisor/high school principal of the elementary district office/school where s/he is assigned
- 2) notifies the DepEd elementary district office supervisor/high school principal on his/her duties as non-government organization (NGO) monitor and shares with them our objective of assisting the DepEd in tracking the delivery of the textbooks.
- 3) advises the elementary district office supervisor/high school principal that s/he will be present during the delivery period.
- 4) coordinates with the elementary district office supervisor/high school principal to ascertain the exact dates and times when the books will be delivered. Please take note that the delivery of books will be done only during weekdays from **8:00 am to 5:00 pm** and delivery shall be made to **only to the elementary school custodian or high school supply officer.**

During Delivery of Textbooks, the volunteer:

- 1) should be present at the elementary district office /high school to:
 - a. witness and record the date and time of delivery of books;
 - b. assist in the counting of the different books or titles (refer to letter to district supervisor or elementary/high school principal regarding the list of books that will be received by each district/school).
 - c. observe the recording/entry of the number of each title of TX/TM delivered and the date of receipt using the "Inspection and Acceptance Report" (IAR) form;
 - i. reflect shortages on the number of books delivered, if any.
 - ii. reflect oversupply (for example 500 books are allocated but the elementary district office supervisor/high school principal says that they only need 300 books); the excess books shall still be accepted and shall be noted in the IAR

Immediately report defective/short deliveries or oversupply of books to DETxt 0919-4560027 and to Provincial Coordinator.

- d. assist in the quality inspection of books (which will be done in random);

If 10% or more of the total quantity of textbooks and teacher's manuals delivered are defective, the ARP must reject the whole quantity delivered.
- e. make sure that the delivery will be received by the authorized receiving personnel (ARP) only.
- 2) Accomplishes the section provided in the IAR marked "For third party monitors"
 - a. records notable incidents/observations in the IAR under the section "Remarks" and makes sure that the notations are supported by specific details.
 - b. affixes signature on the space provided in the IAR if s/he finds everything in order.
- 3) receives the yellow copy of the IAR after it has been signed by the ARP of the school (i.e. district property custodian or supply officer, district supervisor, school head, or any designated authorized school official) and by the third party monitor.

After textbooks have been delivered, the volunteer:

- 1) submits the 4th copy of the IAR to the NGO Provincial Coordinator within two days after the monitoring has been completed.
- 2) fills out and submits "Textbook Monitoring Report" to the NGO Provincial Coordinator within two days after the monitoring has been completed.

APPENDIX C

Cases of Problematic Encounters of CSO Volunteers with DepEd Local Personnel and Suppliers' Forwarders

CASES

1. Pampanga: The CSO volunteer was asking for a daily plan from Watana forwarder and threatened that the books would be returned if forwarder would not submit daily plan. The forwarder told the volunteer that they could not provide the daily plan and explained that CSOs could not reject goods. Forwarder reported incident to IMCS. IMCS asked CSO coordinator to address it.
2. Oriental Mindoro: The CSO Volunteer told the principal that CSOs requested and facilitated the delivery of textbooks to the school. The volunteer also requested the principal to provide snacks for the forwarder. The Division Supply Officer reported incident to IMCS after the principal complained that the stories already spread in the parish.
3. Ilocos Sur: Counting of books lasted until 6 pm because CSOs wanted to count and inspect everything. SD Forwarder complained to IMCS because their deliveries were being delayed. Ms. Rivera talked with volunteer and explained that CSOs should only observe and not inspect (as stated in the *Duties and Responsibilities*). Volunteer raised voice and protested that CSOs should not only observe.

ACTIONS TAKEN

1. *Verification of Report.* Namfrel asked provincial coordinators to give their side. G-Watch contacted IMCS, suppliers and principals to directly hear the story and some other unsaid issues.
2. *Discussions.* Some of the points that the national CSOs propounded were (a) Did the cases merit any further action after verification? (b) Did some volunteers overstep or abuse their role? How did affect the program? (c) Did some volunteers simply misinterpreted or misapplied some provisions of the *Duties and Responsibilities*?; (d) What do we do with valid CSO concerns, e.g. request for daily delivery plan and intensive counting/inspection, which are not in the *Duties and Responsibilities*?
3. *Request for Meeting.* G-Watch suggested that another meeting between IMCS and CSOs may be necessary.

ANALYSIS

1. Some volunteers went beyond their observer's role as stated in the *Duties and Responsibilities* because (a) that was the way to do the job effectively; (b) they needed to do the job effectively since they would sign their names on the IAR; (c) they were not satisfied with the way the DepEd local personnel performed the tasks.
2. Both the DepEd personnel and the CSO volunteers are on the client or customer side seeking good service from the suppliers and forwarders. Efforts to ensure good service, such as doing intensive counting, though not part of the CSO's role, need not be perceived as "abuse".
3. Some misinformation, such as that CSOs requested the books from the national office, are isolated cases, but must be corrected, nevertheless.
4. Client satisfaction in program implementation is a vital consideration in improving the mode of partnership between DepEd-IMCS and CSOs.

Significant reforms in legislation directly concerning civil society between 2003 and 2008 can be considered as a milestone for strengthening the legal framework. However, further reforms in both primary legislation and specifically in relevant secondary legislation are necessary to expand the freedom of association by bringing them in line with the EU standards. In the needs assessment report prepared by TACSO1, the obstacles and challenges of CSOs are illustrated as follows. Following Turkey's recognition as a candidate country, there have been significant improvements in the legislation in the field of freedom of association and civil society having a more liberal approach. However, there is still room to further enhance the freedom of assembly and freedom of associations. The principal objective of the Code of Good Practice is the definition of a set of European principles and guidelines for NGO participation in decision-making processes that are to be implemented at local and national level in Council of Europe member States. Several regional NGO consultation conferences were held throughout Europe before its adoption by the Conference of INGOs on 1 October 2009 and its official launching at the meeting of the Forum for the Future of Democracy in Kyiv on 21 October. Elaborated using a multi-stakeholder approach, the Code has the support of the Council of Europe.