

**S**TRIVE Stage 2  
ANNUAL PLAN 20010/11

**ANNEX B**  
*QAP Report – April 2010 Visit*

## **STRIVE: REPORT ON VISIT BY QAP CHAIR – APRIL 2010**

### **Introduction**

As the Chair of the Quality Assurance Panel for STRIVE 2 I visited Manila, Iloilo and Clark from 3-16 April inclusive.

Prior to this visit a workshop had been conducted in which three levels of planning were considered:

- no extension granted and, therefore completion activities to be initiated
- a six month extension and activities that may be undertaken
- a nine month extension and activities that may be undertaken.

It was made clear by Laine Velasco at the beginning of this workshop that no new activities would be undertaken whatever the decision.

### **Program**

At the beginning of my visit I met with Laine Velasco, Team Leader, and Rechie Cruz and Alan Parkes, Technical Advisers.

The purposes of this meeting were as follows:

- to provide an update on the current status of the request for an extension for STRIVE and to identify issues that have arisen in relation to the probable requirement for adherence to the original timeline for completion of Stage 2 July 2010
- to talk about the progress of the pilot testing of the UIS systems and to consider the milestone criteria in the light of events beyond the control of the project, in particular the preference for an interim report to be considered to allow collection of rich data from the simulation of the end of the school year reporting.

On 6, 7 and 8 April I had the opportunity to observe the JMEA workshop proceedings in Iloilo. This workshop included the reporting on progress to date and a session in which component teams made adjustments to their plans.

On these dates I also observed the UIS Pilot Test Report workshop conducted by Alan Parkes and Rechie Cruz. This workshop was convened to gather and analyse data from the test pilots to inform recommendations which will be included in the final report on UIS. These recommendations will also be included in the interim report.

The Expanded ExeCom meeting that was planned for 13 April was cancelled and, as I understand it, there is still no definite date set.

On 13 April I met with Hazel Aniceto where I provided a brief report of my observations during this visit. I also discussed with Hazel the criteria for Milestones 20 and 21 and the QAP acceptance of the need to make some slight adjustments in the light of events beyond the control of the project, e.g. impact of regional restructure.

In Clark I participated in a meeting that involved two of the regional directors, Dir. Rosemarie Saet and Dir. Mildred Garay, Laine Velasco, Peter Morris and Des Perkins. This meeting was suggested by

Dir. Borgonia (although he was not in attendance) to enable the regional directors to have a complete discussion prior to the Expanded ExeCom. The meeting was chaired by Rose De Leon and agenda was to have resulted in a position the regional directors might take to the Expanded ExeCom meeting. Unfortunately the meeting ended without the development of a joint strategy.

On 16 April I met with Dr. Erlinda Pefianco for a discussion about the two milestones that needed adjustment and matters that may affect the quality of the project outcomes, not the least of which is the political situation and the need for the bureaucracy to prepare for a new secretary.

In Manila and Clark I had informal discussions with Laine Velasco and Peter Morris. As one would expect much of the discussion was about the proposal that has been put forward to AusAID Manila regarding an extension but the discussion was also focused on the initiation of completion procedures.

Throughout the visit I had formal and informal discussions with Laine Velasco, Des Perkins, Administration and Operations Manager, Maya Banez, Deputy Team Leader and the TAs of each of the components.

In addition I have been provided with all relevant documentation.

### **Observations and Issues**

The discussions I had with the TAs responsible for the next two milestones, ie. Implementation Report on the Regional Unified Information System and SOBE Fund Results were most useful. There is some first class work being done by these two component teams. In both cases the regional restructure has affected their work; however that has not stopped the teams from proceeding with their work with enthusiasm and commitment.

As always the reports presented at the JMEA were detailed and the teams were able to identify strategies that need to be put in place regardless of the future of the project.

Throughout all of the activities I observed, or meetings in which I participated, there was a tension between the knowledge there is an end date for the project (and that date is very close) and the hope that there will be an extension granted. In some respects this has resulted in some component team members displaying a lack of real sense that the project is due to end. For example some issues raised at the JMEA were still relatively minor administrative matters. It is possible this tendency on the part of some to hope there will be an extension or another project is a distraction from a real focus on completion.

On several occasions during my visit Laine Velasco presented a summary of the status of the Logframe's status in terms of outputs completed, those in progress or those unable to be accomplished. Of those unable to be completed some have been taken over by another entity or process or have been superseded. Laine Velasco assured the regional directors that each would be visited to discuss where efforts need to be focused.

A major barrier to completion of all Logframe activities has been the significant amount of time advisers and project leaders have been asked to give to supporting the TWGs. In addition to this there was a period when the project was without a deputy and the TA responsible for School Based Management acted in that position resulting in noticeable slippage in that component's outcomes.

It may be possible to wind up activities by the end of July but significant STRIVE investment may be at risk in some areas if sufficient time is not available to fully embed achievements to date.

A possible second barrier has become evident as I observed the activities over the two week visit. This has to do with the three regional directors. Unfortunately the regional directors were unable to attend reporting session at the JMEA due to other commitments thus missing the opportunity to interact with the component teams and offer feedback.

At the meeting in Clark I observed that there is lack of clarity about a position to take at the Expanded ExeCom and lack of a strategy to develop suggested solutions to the list of issues they may wish to raise.

Perhaps it is fortunate that the Expanded ExeCom meeting has been postponed, once again, as this may give the senior regional personnel time to develop a joint set of issues and suggested solutions to take to the meeting. It would be useful for regional directors to take advantage of the Expanded ExeCom as a means for having the regional perspective heard by senior central office personnel.

Historically resources have been forthcoming so is there perhaps a belief that another project will be initiated or another fund will emerge and this belief may have taken away any sense of urgency to develop a joint position and a set of strategies to ensure all of the work to date is not lost?

It remains to be established whether the regional directors have been able to convince personnel that the restructure is not just a physical adjustment but a set of changes that are integral to changing schools. In addition it is unclear whether STRIVE activities are seen as core or organic work to support the implementation of BESRA.

The time allocated to the support of the TWGs, and to the restructure of the regions, was vital to the success of any real change in the way things have been done and to ensure some improvement in student outcomes in the long term. However it is an undeniable fact that this has left the project at least six months short of its necessary timeframe for successful completion. Much time and money has been spent to bring the project to this stage. In my view it would be a travesty if all of that is wasted when the project is so close to bedding down some realistic strategies and practices to ensure sustainability.

Internationally educational departments and schools have a natural tendency to flip-flop from one initiative to another when embracing or responding to the education reform movement. This is as true for well-developed countries such as Australia, United Kingdom, Canada and USA as it is for developing countries or emerging nations throughout the world. The consolidation of current initiatives often pales in comparison with the initial excitement associated with a new project or approach. The well-known adage, or recipe for success, “Do fewer things well”, applies equally to schools, regions and the central office.

Although STRIVE has come a long way, and much has been achieved, some things remain unfinished. The project needs to be fully completed for progress to be embedded or regrettably the system may opt to move on to the next project or innovation - the next big idea - rather than finishing what has been started.

At the JMEA Psyche (Che Che) Olayvar, Director, EDPITAF, spoke passionately of the need for the good work to continue and the responsibility that regions resourced under STRIVE now have to support other regions to make changes. However some financial investment in resources and

facilities by centre and regions is necessary for sustainable improvement at the school level. A systemic lack of resources is a distraction for principals and school communities.

### **Conclusion**

It is my very strong belief that without resources and an extension to the project that allows time for the proper bedding down of changes, the STRIVE project will not fully achieve its objectives. If this is the result it is important to note that the students themselves and improved educational opportunities will be the causalities, not the department, regions or teachers.

**Adele Pottenger**  
**Chair, Quality Assurance Panel, STRIVE.**

**27 April 2010**