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 Promoting transparency and social accountability, one school at a time

*Checkmyschool helps citizens access information, send feedback, and resolve issues on education services.*

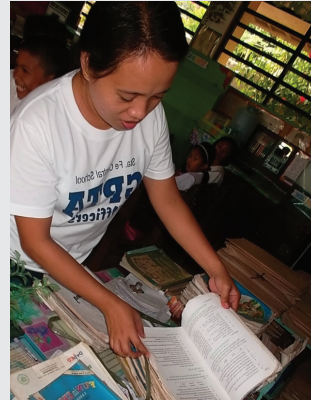
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# Check My School

## A Case Study on Citizens' Monitoring of the Education Sector in the Philippines



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# **Check My School**

## **A Case Study on Citizens' Monitoring of the Education Sector in the Philippines**

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**The Affiliated Network for Social Accountability–East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP)**, is a regional network of social accountability practitioners. ANSA-EAP’s vision is to help improve governance by mainstreaming the social accountability approach. ANSA-EAP cultivates the East Asia and Pacific way of doing social accountability—upholding the region’s diverse culture and norms. ANSA-EAP reaches out to citizen groups, nongovernmental organizations, civic associations, the business sector, and government institutions to promote the monitoring by citizens of government performance, specifically the quality of public service delivery and the transparency of public transactions. Begun with startup support from the World Bank’s Development Grant Facility (2008–11), ANSA-EAP is a nonprofit foundation registered in the Philippines and housed within the Ateneo School of Government, a unit of the Ateneo de Manila University. For more information, visit <http://www.ansa-eap.net/>.

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANSA	Affiliated Network for Social Accountability
ANSA-EAP	Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific
BEIS	Basic Education Information Services
BESRA	Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda
CE	constructive engagement
CM	citizen monitoring
CMS	Check My School
CSO	civil society organization
DepEd	Department of Education
GPS	Global Positioning System
G-Watch	Government Watch
ICT	information and communication technology
MoA	memorandum of agreement
NAT	National Achievement Test
OGP	Open Government Partnership
PAISA	Planning, Allocations and Expenditures, Institutions: Studies in Accountability
PTA	parent-teacher association
SAc	social accountability
SMS	short message service

# Executive Summary

Check My School (CMS) is a community monitoring project that aims to promote transparency and social accountability in the Philippine education sector by tracking the provision of services in public schools. The project uses a blended approach, which combines on-the-ground community monitoring with the use of information and communication technology (ICT). CMS had been initiated and designed by the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP) and jointly supported by the World Bank Institute and the Open Society Institute.

Although CMS is a young project (the pilot began in early 2011), it has already attracted worldwide attention of governments, civil society organizations, and international donors. CMS is often cited as a “good practice” in the field, and the governments of several countries, including Indonesia, Kenya, and Moldova, are interested in adapting the CMS model to their country contexts. This case study sheds light on the design and implementation features of the first pilot cycle of CMS in public schools across the Philippines. The case study discusses the general political background and operating environment of the CMS project, its concept and operating principles, the roles and incentives of the major stakeholders involved in its design and implementation, and the ways in which CMS aims to use ICTs. In addition, the case study provides a step-by-step analysis of the first CMS project cycle in 2011, examines its accomplishments and challenges, and provides lessons from the first pilot year of the project’s operation. The case study concludes with recommendations for projects that aim to follow the footsteps of CMS.

The major lessons from the first year of CMS’s operation are as follows:

- **Constructive engagement leads to a cooperative relationship with government.** The CMS project started with the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MoA) between ANSA-EAP and the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd). As part of the MoA, DepEd fully endorsed CMS, committing to share with ANSA-EAP all its available data on public schools and to help it establish relations with schools. This cooperation, especially with key government champions, has been one of the most important and promising features of CMS.



- **Organized presence on the ground is critical.** The mobilization of networks of committed and diligent “infomediaries”<sup>1</sup> and volunteers—through the affiliation of ANSA-EAP with the Ateneo School of Government and its own networks—allowed CMS to effectively tap into local networks of civil society organizations, youth groups, and socially active individuals. The strong social mobilization efforts were supported by capacity-building and training activities to provide participating stakeholders with valuable knowledge and leadership skills and help infomediaries conduct validation activities.
- **Complementarity with ongoing government projects creates an environment conducive to initiatives.** The CMS project fits well within the current sociopolitical environment in the Philippines. DepEd’s efforts to implement large-scale decentralization reform in the country, coupled with pressure on school administrators to actively engage community stakeholders in their school’s management, have created a favorable environment for community monitoring initiatives such as CMS.
- **Innovative ICT-enabled projects are an investment in the future of community monitoring.** Although CMS was primarily envisioned as an online platform, its online presence during the first pilot year was relatively limited because of a variety of challenges inside and outside the project scope. ANSA-EAP’s flexibility and approach of iterative self-assessment and experimentation with different ICT tools (for example, using Facebook if problems arise with the main website) are promising. CMS has been working on a new website to improve this situation, and time will show the effectiveness and functionality of the new platform.

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<sup>1</sup> Infomediaries are community leaders and socially active individuals from all over the country recruited to the project.

# 1

## The Concept of Check My School

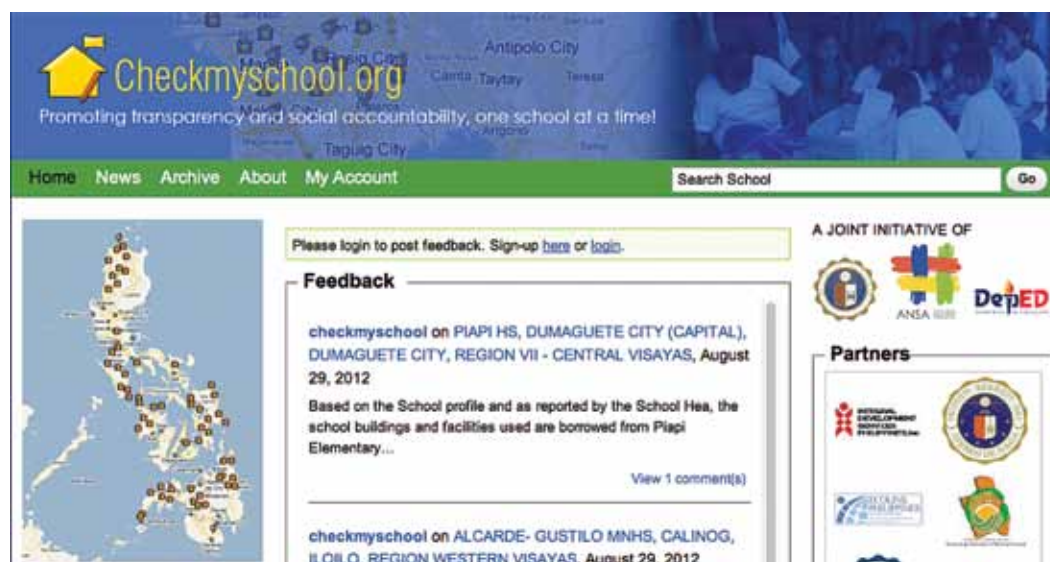
Check My School (CMS) is an innovative social accountability platform launched by the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP), using open data to promote citizen participation in the monitoring of public school performance in the Philippines.

### Objectives

CMS aims to improve the provision of services in public schools across the Philippines by pursuing three major objectives:

- **Data validation**—enhancing the integrity and accuracy of Department of Education (DepEd) school data by gathering information in schools across the country and comparing the collected data to the official DepEd data.
- **Community engagement**—increasing community awareness and involvement in the provision of education services by monitoring the conditions of public schools, and engaging community members in collaborative problem solving around issues of concern identified by schools.
- **Information provision**—facilitating public access to accurate information about the public education system. As part of this objective, CMS aims to present educational data in a consolidated and easily accessible format on an online platform (figure 1.1), thereby enabling citizens to comment on the data and identify issues of concern.

Figure 1.1: Checkmyschool.org Website



Source: Checkmyschool.org.

## Methods

CMS aims to accomplish these objectives by relying on the “constructive engagement” principle of ANSA-EAP—engagement of citizens and government agencies in monitoring public service provision, facilitating dialogues, and using collaborative problem solving. As part of this process, CMS uses a blended approach that combines community mobilization and monitoring activities in schools across the country with an online platform where information on service provision can be easily accessed, shared, and monitored. As one of the organization’s flagships, CMS is a key example of the innovative information and communication technology (ICT) initiatives emerging from the ANSA-EAP portfolio that brings to life social accountability principles.

The intended CMS method of operation is fairly intuitive. ANSA-EAP obtains from DepEd all its available data on public schools in the Philippines. These data are consolidated and published in a user-friendly format on the CMS website. Simultaneously, ANSA-EAP recruits and trains “infomediaries”—community leaders and socially active individuals from all over the country. These infomediaries establish contacts with schools and local DepEd officials and mobilize volunteers from the local community. Then infomediaries and volunteers visit the selected schools and validate the official DepEd data; that is, they gather new data, compare the official data to the actual conditions of the school, talk to school administrators, and finally encode the collected data. All validated data are then published on the CMS website, and discrepancies between the official data and the newly collected data are highlighted. This information reveals the needs and shortages experienced by schools and signals how service provision can be improved (see figure 6.1 in section 6 of this case study for a visualization of the CMS pilot cycle in 2011).

## Theory of Change

The theory of change underpinning the CMS model assumes that community-driven data validation and easy access to data via the Internet will enable government officials and citizens to highlight issues of concern in the education sector and identify potential solutions. As part of this approach, the intended audience of CMS consists of both DepEd officials and community members.

CMS aims to provide DepEd with two valuable deliverables: (a) a data validation tool that complements the Basic Education Information Services (BEIS) system operated by the department and (b) a problem identification mechanism that can assist DepEd in improving its performance in public schools across the country.

CMS can benefit local community members by providing accurate information about the quality of service provision in the education sector and the performance of public schools. This information may help civil society organizations (CSOs) and community members better understand the major issues of concern in the education sector and develop collaborative solutions.

# 2

## Enabling Environment for CMS

Check My School (figure 2.1) has been designed and implemented in the midst of two large-scale developments in the education sector in the Philippines in the past decade: (a) a decentralization reform in the public education system and (b) a general move toward policies that improve the transparency and accountability of public service provision. These two general developments created an environment conducive to the introduction of the CMS project and facilitated the collaboration between DepEd and ANSA-EAP. In addition, two civil society-led initiatives paved the way for CMS.

### Decentralization in the Public Education System

DepEd is one of the biggest bureaucracies and public service providers in the Philippines. It employs more than a half-million teachers, administrative officials, and school personnel and oversees a significant procurement budget. After long-lasting struggles with inefficiencies and leakages, the Philippine public education sector has been undergoing in the past decade a major decentralization reform.

As part of this change, DepEd has been implementing since 2006 the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA), which aims to improve the performance of the public education system by pursuing a decentralized, participatory, and community-centered approach. In a nutshell, the following two

Figure 2.1: CMS Promotional Piece



Source: Checkmyschool.org.

major objectives pursued by BESRA involve the delegation of decision-making authorities to the school level and engagement of local communities in school management operations:

- **Empowering schools.** BESRA aims to empower school administrators by enabling them to independently identify education priorities and make decisions related to curriculum design, teacher hiring, facility maintenance, and other management aspects. Simultaneously with this delegation of responsibilities to the local level, BESRA introduced monitoring mechanisms that enhance the transparency and accountability of school administrators to DepEd and local division superintendents.
- **Engaging communities.** BESRA promotes the principle that those who are directly affected by the performance of a school are the ones who should be involved in its management. The reform therefore aspires to engage the stakeholders of each school in its decision-making and problem-solving processes. (Such stakeholders may include students, parents, teachers, administrators, local politicians, local businesses, local CSOs and groups, and other interested community members.)

## Support of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives

In line with its effort to engage community members in local school management, DepEd has been supporting various initiatives that aim to make its own performance more transparent and accountable to the public. As part of this activity, the department launched BEIS, which collects and consolidates a variety of data on service provision in public schools and makes such information accessible to the public online. In addition, DepEd has been welcoming various civil society efforts to provide complementary, third-party monitoring of service delivery programs. These programs include Textbook Count (for textbook delivery), Bayanihang Eskwela (for school building construction), and Bantay Eskwela (for furniture inventory).<sup>2</sup>

## Predecessors: G-Watch and Textbook Count

Although CMS offers an innovative approach that combines traditional community monitoring with an online presence, the concept of undertaking monitoring in the education sector is not new. In fact, CMS builds on the work of Government Watch (G-Watch), a project that has also been hosted by the Ateneo School of Government.

G-Watch was launched by the Ateneo School of Government in 2000 as a general anticorruption program. The program aimed to improve the provision of a variety of public services by establishing

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<sup>2</sup> For further information about Brigada Eskwela, see box 9.1.

partnerships with relevant government departments, obtaining from them official procurement data, and using the data as a benchmark to monitor the delivery of public services on the ground. As a result of its monitoring activities, G-Watch managed to expose a range of procurement problems, including missing textbooks, unfinished school buildings, overpriced medicines, and delayed road construction.

The *Textbook Count* project, launched in 2002, was the most effective component of the G-Watch program. The project mobilized volunteers, who monitored the delivery of textbooks to public schools all over the country. As part of the project, volunteers would wait for the delivery of textbooks in schools according to a predetermined schedule and then check and count the number of books delivered.

Although Textbook Count assumed responsibility for the training, organization, and oversight of volunteers' activities, its partner CSOs were responsible for volunteer mobilization activities. As part of this initiative, the project collaborated with election watchdogs and youth organizations, such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of the Philippines. Furthermore, to improve the delivery of textbooks to far-flung villages, Textbook Count collaborated with Coca-Cola and used its distribution vehicles for transportation of books.

During its operating years, Textbook Count tracked tens of millions of textbooks. It managed to reduce the price of textbooks by 40 percent, to improve the accuracy of textbook deliveries, and to shorten DepEd's procurement cycle from 24 months to 12 months (Parafina 2006). Despite Textbook Count's considerable accomplishments, the Ateneo School of Government found the program difficult to sustain.

# 3

## ANSA-EAP as the Incubator of CMS

ANSA-EAP is a nonprofit foundation registered under Philippine law and hosted by the Ateneo School of Government at the Ateneo de Manila University. Under the World Bank's Development Grant Facility, the Ateneo School of Government received funding for the 2008–11 period to set up ANSA-EAP as a CSO network initiative for social accountability with support from the World Bank Institute.

### ANSA-EAP's Approach

The cornerstone of ANSA-EAP's approach in East Asia and the Pacific has been to facilitate constructive engagement between civil society groups and the government. ANSA-EAP regards the link between civil society and state agencies at the national and subnational levels as crucial, because social accountability efforts that *engage* state agencies are more likely to yield positive outcomes—that is, to realize the objectives of participatory governance and the capacity building of both civil society and government actors for future work and partnerships (box 3.1).

**Box 3.1: The ANSA-EAP Formula for Social Accountability:  $SAC = (CE \times CM)^a$**

Social accountability (SAC) has two elements: constructive engagement (CE) and citizen monitoring (CM). The value of these elements is amplified when both CE and CM are raised to the power of assertion (a).

CE advances the outcomes of CM, as in cases in which monitoring initiatives are successfully institutionalized as government policy over the long term. In the same way, CM opens more arenas for CE—whether through the expansion of these monitoring initiatives to other government processes (for example, in the public financial management cycle, procurement, and budget monitoring) or through their expansion to other agencies and sectors. Both CE and CM are fundamental to the practice of SAC. SAC will not be possible if either or both are absent (if CE or CM = 0).



This constructive engagement process involves two key components: sustained dialogue and collaborative problem solving. In line with these principles, the core of ANSA-EAP's mandate is linking citizen groups in a network that advocates and practices social accountability. The social accountability approach of ANSA-EAP is based on four pillars:

- **Organized and capable citizen groups.** ANSA-EAP regards the capacity of civil society actors as a key factor of successful social accountability initiatives. The level of organization of citizen groups, the breadth and scope of their membership, their technical and advocacy skills, and their capacity to mobilize resources and effectively use media are all central to the success of a social accountability action. Thus, in many cases, a social accountability initiative begins from a capacity-building effort, aiming to ensure that groups possess sufficient tools to organize themselves and voice their concerns.
- **Government champions who are willing to engage.** Government's responsiveness to citizen participation depends on the particular political, legal, social, and economic environment in which the social accountability initiative takes place. According to ANSA-EAP's vision, space for citizen participation is opened in government institutions that have reform champions. An important part of social accountability initiatives is therefore finding and nurturing those champions from the ranks of bureaucrats, government officials, and public servants.
- **Context and cultural appropriateness.** ANSA-EAP recognizes that the parameters for social accountability are largely determined by existing contextual and cultural conditions. To a large extent, social accountability action must respond to and operate within the larger context and framework of a sector, nation, or region. The appropriateness of the social accountability approach—including tools, techniques, and other mechanisms—is determined by a variety of political, sociocultural, legal, and institutional factors. Any social accountability initiative should therefore be based on a careful analysis and nuanced understanding of the enabling and restraining conditions within which the initiative is supposed to operate.
- **Access to information.** The availability and reliability of public data are essential for a social accountability practice. Such data, analyzed and correctly interpreted by competent citizen groups, lie at the core of constructive engagement. Social accountability fails when data and information are either absent or willfully denied. In this respect, access to information can mean two things: (a) physical access to source documents and (b) their availability in a format that is understandable to users. Because not all information originates in documents, access may refer to access to people who possess the information (such as public officials).

## The ANSA-EAP Portfolio

As a regional network,<sup>3</sup> ANSA-EAP serves as a resource facility for social accountability in East Asia and the Pacific. Activities supported by the network provide opportunities for CSOs and local and national government agencies as well as other interested stakeholders to learn from one another's experience of implementing social accountability initiatives. Dissemination of country experiences and lessons is central to the network's effort in linking communities of practitioners across the region. As part of this activity, the major objectives pursued by ANSA-EAP are the following:

- Developing cross-country collaboration on social accountability and demand-side governance initiatives
- Providing technical assistance to different countries so the quality of social accountability initiatives in these countries is enhanced
- Delivering training programs on specific tools and techniques
- Sharing country experiences and lessons from social accountability and demand-side governance initiatives regionally and globally

Pursuing the principles of the *World Development Report 2004* (World Bank 2003), which defined the deficient provision of public services as a social accountability challenge, the monitoring efforts of ANSA-EAP revolve around the delivery of public services in a variety of areas. In this respect, ANSA-EAP serves as the nexus between government and its citizens and is the link between stakeholder groups that rally around the social accountability approach to good governance. The network's prevailing approach has been to build the capacity of its partners through learning-in-action programs, which are customized to fit the needs and context of each partner group and are focused on a competency or skill set for social accountability.

## ANSA-EAP's Approach to ICTs

As part of its activities, ANSA-EAP develops innovative ways to integrate ICTs into social accountability projects. Innovative, cutting-edge technologies—such as the use of mobile phones, interactive digital mapping, georeferencing, and visualization of data—enable citizens and CSOs to directly link with service providers and public resource managers, as well as to access and share available data. The goal of ANSA-EAP's ICT ventures is to bring about greater government responsiveness to citizens, more widespread and open sharing of public data, and improved service delivery. Projects like CMS demonstrate

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<sup>3</sup> ANSA-EAP's geographic network is composed of country convener groups in four countries—Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, and the Philippines—and regional thematic networks for procurement monitoring and social accountability initiatives in the extractive industries.

how ICT endeavors can support the implementation of ANSA's four pillars of social accountability into practice.

## The Structure of ANSA-EAP and the CMS Secretariat

ANSA-EAP organizes and connects partners with a common interest in social accountability through in-country and thematic convener groups.<sup>4</sup> Currently, six country convener groups operate in four countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, and the Philippines. These in-country convening platforms are supported with focal points in the form of individual Affiliated Network for Social Accountability (ANSA) fellows. The fellows are involved with civil society agencies themselves and coordinate the work of partner organizations, represent ANSA-EAP, and communicate regularly with the network's secretariat in Manila. In addition, lead "conveners" or coordinating organizations are instituted in each country. ANSA-EAP connects and coordinates these networks by connecting existing citizen groups to other citizen groups, citizens to their governments, and (within the region) one country to another. Operating at the regional level, ANSA-EAP supports thematic networks in key social accountability areas (procurement monitoring, service delivery, extractive industries, and youth agenda).

The ANSA secretariat consists of team members with diverse skills and capacities that allow them to support various types of social accountability practices pursued in different countries. The ANSA-EAP team that is responsible for design and implementation aspects of CMS consists of five individuals: Mr. Dondon Parafina, coordinator of ANSA-EAP; Ms. Jecel Censoro, associate coordinator; Mr. John Aldrich Telebrico, network researcher; Mr. Paul Thomas Villanueva, infomediary coordinator; and Dr. Angelita Gregorio-Medel, executive director of ANSA-EAP. While these individuals lead the CMS project, they benefit from the help and support of the entire ANSA team.

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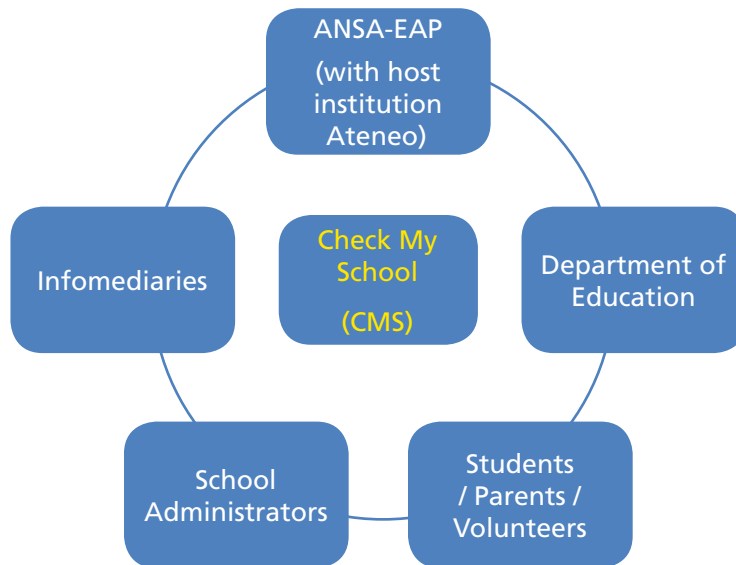
<sup>4</sup> For a visualization of ANSA-EAP's structure, see appendix A.

# 4

## Other CMS Stakeholders: Roles and Incentives

Figure 4.1 outlines the major stakeholders in the CMS initiative (figure 4.1).

*Figure 4.1: Major Stakeholders in CMS*



Source: World Bank.

### Ateneo School of Government

The Ateneo School of Government is a host institution for ANSA-EAP and the executing agency of the World Bank Development Grant Facility. As a recognized center for research and policy work, the Ateneo School of Government has strong experience with social accountability tools and programs as well

as strong links with agencies, civil society, and government engaged in governance work, and a reach beyond the Philippines.

The school has played an important role in the CMS project. Because the Ateneo School of Government was widely known for its pioneering and promising social accountability initiatives, the affiliation with the school has helped ANSA-EAP establish partnerships and connections with DepEd officials, CSOs, youth organizations, and others.

## Department of Education

In a memorandum of agreement (MoA) signed between ANSA-EAP and DepEd in June 2011, the CMS project was defined as “a joint social accountability undertaking of the DepEd and the ANSA-EAP.” In line with the imperative of ANSA’s social accountability pillars, DepEd has indeed been a key stakeholder of CMS.

As part of the MoA, DepEd committed to provide ANSA-EAP the school data held by the following units and offices: BEIS, Procurement Service, Physical Facilities and Schools Engineering Division, National Education Testing and Research Center, Instructional Materials Council Secretariat, and Budget Office. These data include information on budgetary allocations, enrollment, number of teachers, number of textbooks delivered to schools, number of computers and chairs available in schools, number of classrooms and restrooms, and a variety of test results.

DepEd also committed to help ANSA-EAP establish relations with designated schools where CMS validations would be conducted; to closely coordinate with ANSA-EAP in analyzing the information collected as part of CMS validations; and to ensure the cooperation with the CMS project of DepEd officials in the regional, division, and district offices. Furthermore, the department committed to receive, respond, and act on feedback, comments, and recommendations made by citizens through the CMS website.

Because securing such a level of commitment from government agencies is typically difficult, understanding the motivations for DepEd’s support of CMS is important. Several factors can be identified:

- **BESRA and decentralization.** DepEd has been encouraging third-party monitoring initiatives as part of its general decentralization reform in the education sector. Attempting to delegate enhanced responsibilities to school principals and increase the involvement of community stakeholders in school management, DepEd recognized that a community monitoring initiative such as CMS could yield positive results.
- **Inaccurate official data.** School administrators are required to complete numerous time-consuming forms and reports about the condition of their schools. These forms and reports are then submitted to local division offices, which consolidate them and send them to the regional and national offices. This process is known to be inefficient, cumbersome, and prone to multiple mistakes and errors (in some parts of the country, it is not yet fully computerized). Because of the intricacies of this process, DepEd has acknowledged that the official school data in its possession may be incomplete or inac-

curate. The need to have independent third parties validate these data has therefore fueled DepEd’s willingness to cooperate with CMS.

- **Previous collaboration.** DepEd had worked in the past with the staff of ANSA-EAP on G-Watch and Textbook Count. Through these relationships, ANSA’s staff gained the trust of DepEd officials. By building on this successful past experience, ANSA-EAP and DepEd engaged in a formal and collaborative relationship with ANSA-EAP and CMS.
- **Shortage of ICT resources.** In its MoA with ANSA-EAP, DepEd stressed “the need for a systematic web-based public information facility on education services that is easily accessible and user-friendly and facilitates citizens’ engagement with government to improve such services.” This provision might seem surprising, because all the data provided by DepEd to ANSA-EAP are, in principle, publicly available online. However, although DepEd operates its own online platform for school data, this system is not fully functional, and interested citizens cannot easily access the data. The department was therefore interested in collaborating with CMS to improve these functionalities without the need to spend its own resources.

## Infomediaries

“Infomediaries” are individuals who are recruited by CMS to organize and lead validations in schools across the country (figure 4.2). They played a central role in the implementation of the CMS pilot in 2011. The profile of these individuals is as follows:

- **Identity.** ANSA-EAP recruited 20 infomediaries for its first CMS pilot—8 men and 12 women, ranging from 19 to 51 years of age. By and large, they are university students who are active in student organizations, leaders of youth organizations (such as the Boy Scouts), employees in education-centered nongovernmental organizations, coordinators of parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and program officers of good governance programs in colleges and universities.
- **Objectives.** According to the original design of CMS, the infomediaries were to serve as a bridge between the online CMS platform and local communities, posting on the CMS platform information on behalf of these

*Figure 4.2: The CMS Infomediaries*



Source: Courtesy of Check My School.

- communities and helping them establish their online presence. However, because of the limited functionality of the CMS website during the validation process, the actual responsibilities of infomediaries were more substantial: they were entrusted with the whole preparation and organization of the CMS validation process.
- **Activities.** After completing a three-day training by ANSA-EAP, infomediaries selected schools for CMS validations,<sup>5</sup> coordinated the necessary details with school administrators, mobilized volunteers, conducted CMS validations, consolidated the data, reported the data back to ANSA-EAP, and took part in some of the online CMS activities. Some of the infomediaries engaged in Operation Thank You (the problem-solving mechanism agreed on by them) and attempted to help schools solve problems that were identified during the validation process.
  - **Incentives.** Although their work was time consuming, infomediaries were not compensated. ANSA-EAP provided them with only a small amount of money to cover some expenses. Hence, the infomediaries' motivation to commit to the CMS process cannot be explained by the prospects of a financial reward. Infomediaries who were interviewed for this report explained their decision to participate in the CMS project by their high interest in the education sector, their willingness to gain leadership and organizational skills, their intention to start a public service career in the education sector, and their sense of social responsibility toward public schools in their communities.

## School Administrators

The cooperation and support of school administrators were key to the successful implementation of CMS. The role of school principals was to coordinate with infomediaries and volunteers the details of the validation process, help them collect information about the school's facilities and conditions, and identify problems. Interviews conducted with a number of principals in different schools showed that school administrators generally had a positive and supportive regard for CMS validations. They were largely happy to collaborate with CMS and satisfied with the way validations were conducted.

These findings are highly positive and are central to understanding the CMS model. Principals were not threatened by the fact that their schools would be "checked," despite the potential association between CMS and the concept of inspection. The cooperative approach of school administrators can be explained by three major factors:

- **DepEd's endorsement.** Infomediaries initiated their contacts with school principals by presenting to them a written endorsement of CMS activities signed by a DepEd official. Because school administrators are subject to multiple reporting requirements to DepEd, principals regarded CMS as another monitoring exercise initiated by the department. As such, the majority of principals did not question the CMS initiative and felt obliged to cooperate with it.

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<sup>5</sup> For further details about the selection process, see section 6.

- **Shortage of resources.** As part of the decentralization reform in the country, schools have been requested to make an increasing number of managerial decisions on their own. However, they often lack the funds necessary for the implementation of these decisions. The maintenance and operational budget allocated to schools by DepEd is often insufficient, and school administrators struggle to tap all available resources. As part of this process, schools are under constant pressure to engage local stakeholders—parents, alumni students, teachers, local CSOs, local political representatives—in raising funds and helping to solve the school’s problems. Given this reality, the interviewed principals explained that they were willing to open the doors of their schools to “anyone who might offer help”—even if such help appeared distant and was not guaranteed.
- **Improved channel of communication.** Another factor, which is closely related to the previous one, is that existing communication channels between school principals and DepEd officials are often ineffective. Even if DepEd responds to reports that flow from school administrators and allocates to them additional funds, the communication with DepEd is often lengthy and cumbersome. (Formal reports that are prepared by school administrators are first sent to local division offices and only then forwarded to regional and national offices.) Because the results of CMS validations are reported directly to DepEd, school principals regarded CMS as an improved channel of communication with DepEd officials. Although principals realized that DepEd’s response was not guaranteed, they saw no harm in cooperating with the CMS process.



# 5

## The Technology behind CMS

### The Design of the CMS Platform

The CMS project offered ANSA-EAP an opportunity to explore the integration and use of ICT tools in citizen monitoring. As noted in ANSA-EAP's Infomediaries Manual, "the advent of Internet technology has given the government another facility to fulfill its mandate of properly collecting, storing, disseminating, and using information for public benefit. Various government agencies in the Philippines, however, have not yet taken advantage of this facility in a more programmatic and systematic manner" (ANSA-EAP 2011b, 5). Checkmyschool.org, the online CMS platform, aimed to fill this gap. ANSA-EAP intended to create a platform that consolidated all the available government data on the public education system in the Philippines into one source. The supply of information to the website was relatively straightforward. ANSA-EAP posted on the website the data it obtained from DepEd and instructed infomediaries to upload the information they collected during school validations.

Overall, these data cover more than 44,000 public schools in the Philippines. However, because DepEd does not possess GPS (Global Positioning System) coordinates for all these schools, the interactive map contains only 8,684 schools—the ones for which GPS coordinates are known.<sup>6</sup> The platform was supposed to include key indicators and measures of performance and present official DepEd information alongside data validated by CMS in an easily accessible and user-friendly way. In addition, the CMS platform aimed to facilitate community engagement around education issues, encouraging users to post feedback about different schools and respond to emerging issues.

As part of this vision, the original CMS website contained the following features:

- An interactive map of the Philippines that gave the precise location of schools and the data DepEd possessed on each of the schools. As can be seen in figure 5.1, these data included enrollment, student-to-teacher ratio, student-to-seat ratio, student-to-book ratio, number of instructional

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<sup>6</sup> When the CMS project was initiated, DepEd sought ANSA-EAP's help in tracking the GPS coordinates of the missing schools. However, the local networks of CMS did not find an effective way to fulfill this request as part of their activities.

- rooms, number of teaching shifts, number of toilet bowls, NAT (National Achievement Test) score, and school budget.
- A search engine that helps find specific schools through geographic filters and complements the map.
  - A “services” tab that calls on users to contribute to the CMS project, encouraging them to “volunteer to update information,” “send us your feedback,” “join monthly polls,” “respond to issues,” “send GPS,” and “participate in special programs.”
  - A “communities” tab that provides the names and contacts of organizations and individuals who are active in the public education sector.
  - An “archives” tab that contains a variety of CMS-related documents, such as DepEd reports and relevant news.
  - An “FAQ” tab that contains general information about the purpose of CMS and the functions of the website.
  - An SMS (short message service) function that allows users to send reports via SMS directly to the website.

*Figure 5.1: The Interactive CMS Map*



Source: Checkmyschool.org.

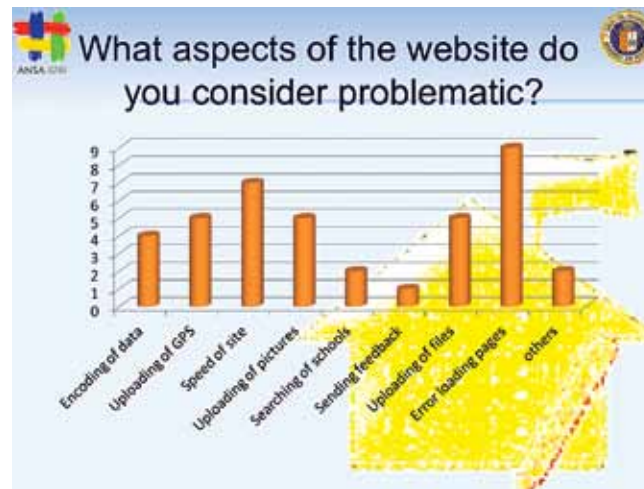
## Technical Issues

Although both ANSA-EAP and DepEd officials recognized the importance of a publicly available and reliable source of information on the education system, the incorporation of ICT into pilot CMS activities has naturally been challenging.

First, Internet penetration in the Philippines is estimated at around 30 percent, and the general technological literacy is relatively low. Given this reality, the extent to which local communities—the targeted audience of such a platform—would be able (and willing) to effectively use the platform to voice their concerns and whether the information provided on the platform would satisfy their needs and demands are not fully clear. Because ANSA-EAP was aware of this challenge, it incorporated the ICT component into the project in anticipation of the eventual increase and spread of the Internet in the Philippines, thus aiming to prepare local communities in the use of ICT tools for social accountability purposes. Given that the CMS project has just completed its pilot phase, determining the level of community preparedness and openness for this type of civil society–led ICT initiatives may be premature.

Furthermore, this conceptual challenge has not fully materialized in the pilot CMS year because the website encountered more existential technical challenges. In fact, analysis shows that the website was underused during the CMS pilot year. However, ANSA views it as a future investment in building communities' preparedness for using ICT tools. Technical challenges that were encountered by users can be attributed to both the design of the platform and more general Internet access problems in the Philippines. As figure 5.2 indicates, infomediaries who were supposed to upload to the website information from their validation activities in schools reported multiple technical problems that prevented them from effectively using the website (for example, difficulties in uploading data and errors in loading pages, speed problems, and lack of user-friendliness). Furthermore, the SMS feature of the website was not in use because it was only activated late in the pilot year and encountered technical glitches.

*Figure 5.2: Results of a Survey Completed by CMS Infomediaries in October 2011 (N = 20)*



Source: Courtesy of Dondon Parafina.

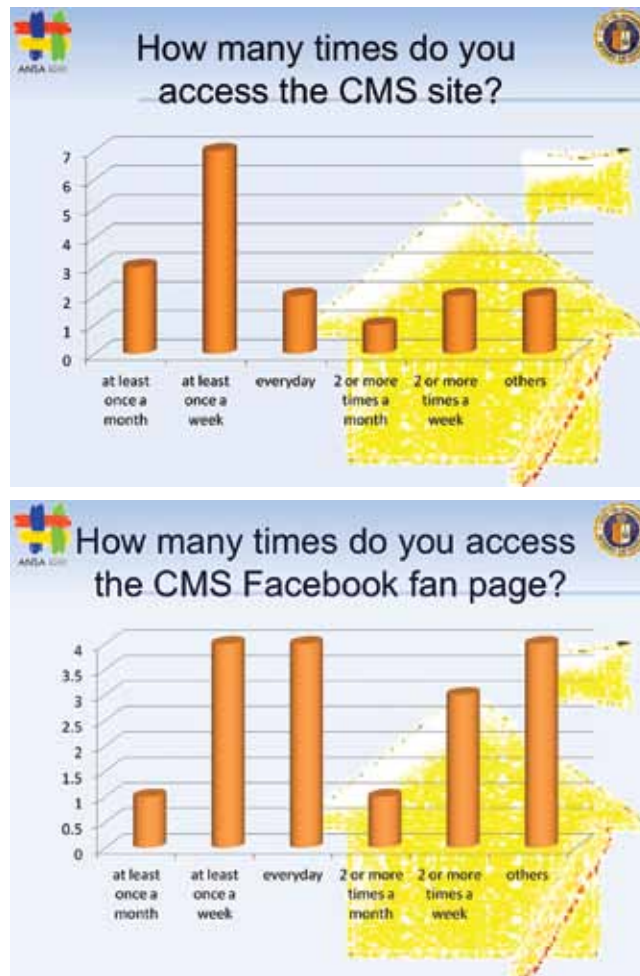
## Benefits of Social Media

In light of the difficulties encountered with the CMS website, ANSA-EAP encouraged infomediaries to take advantage of the CMS Facebook page, which was more convenient for providing updates.

During the course of three months, during which validation activities were conducted, the posts that appeared on the Facebook page were viewed almost 75,000 times and more than 430 feedback comments were written. These statistics do not allow one to digest the number of unique users who viewed the posts, the amount of time they spent on each post, or their identity. However, the data make clear that the Facebook page was actively used by infomediaries in August and September 2011 and was more popular with users than the CMS website (see figure 5.3).<sup>7</sup>

The ANSA-EAP team has been looking for a more sustainable solution, aiming to identify a scheme that best fits the Philippine reality. As part of this effort, ANSA-EAP invited the CMS infomediaries to reflect on how the website could be improved for future CMS iterations. In light of their suggestions, the team decided to fully revamp the original website in advance of the second cycle of CMS validations. The website for the second cycle has been under development since November 2011. (For a description of the website's new features, see section 9.)

*Figure 5.3: Results of a Survey Completed by CMS Infomediaries in October 2011 (N = 20)*



Source: Courtesy of Dondon Parafina.

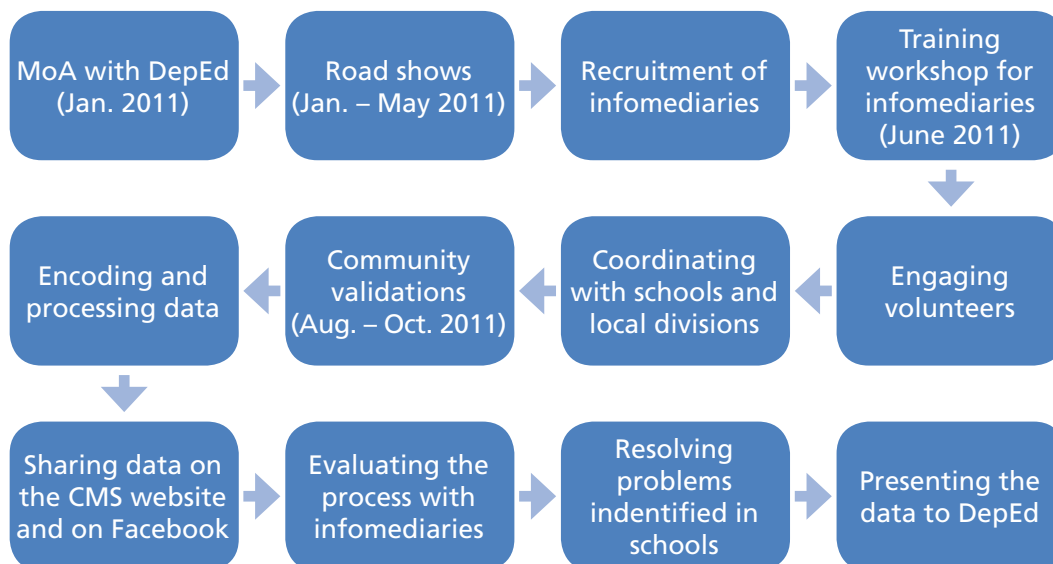
<sup>7</sup> The usage statistics for the CMS website confirm these findings. According to Google Analytics, the website had a total of 8,262 visits and 5,221 visitors over the course of nine months. Each visitor stayed on the website for an average of six minutes and viewed three pages. The website experienced the peak of its popularity in August 2011, when infomediaries attempted to upload to it information about their validation activities.

# 6

## The 12-Step Implementation Cycle of CMS

The CMS project has been structured around data validation activities in schools. This section describes the full cycle of the first CMS pilot (see figure 6.1), from January 2011 to May 2012.<sup>8</sup>

*Figure 6.1: The First CMS Pilot Cycle*



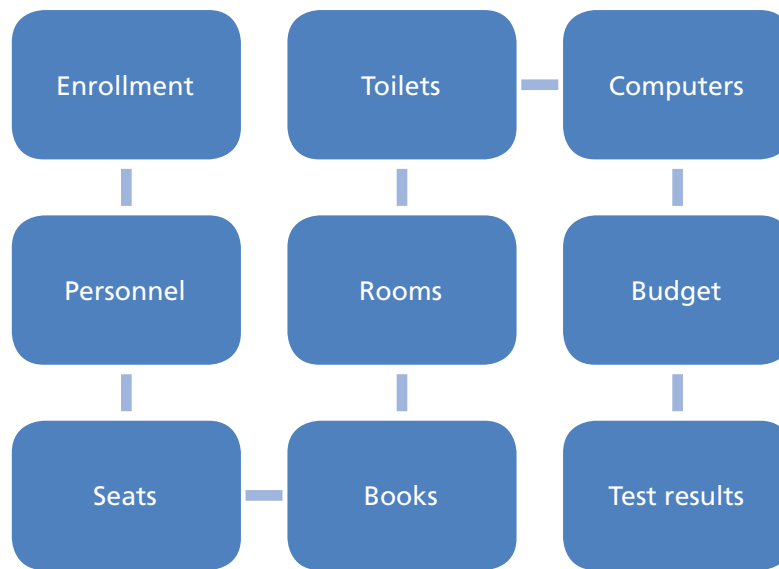
Source: World Bank.

<sup>8</sup> Because the CMS project was implemented in 2011 for the first time, these activities are part of a pilot and not necessarily representative of the subsequent iterations of CMS. The CMS activities for 2012–13 are described in section 9 of this case study.

## Step 1: Acquiring Data from DepEd

ANSA acquired the data that appeared on the CMS website in 2011, as part of its MoA with DepEd. These data covered the following topics for each school: budgetary allocations; enrollment; number of teachers; number of seats, toilets, classrooms, and textbooks; test performance; and computers (figure 6.2).

*Figure 6.2: Data Acquired from DepEd*



Source: World Bank.

## Step 2: Performing Outreach

After securing DepEd's cooperation and obtaining the necessary data, ANSA-EAP started its outreach efforts. Road shows (see figure 6.3) were the main outreach activity for the 2011 CMS pilot. Between January and May 2011, ANSA-EAP conducted such road shows in four locations: National Capital Region, Baguio-Benguet, Tacloban-Leyte, and Zamboanga-Pagadian.



*Figure 6.3: CMS Road Show in Zamboanga City*



Source: Courtesy of Check My School.

The road shows had the following features:

- **Objectives and contents.** The road shows aimed to achieve three objectives: (a) to introduce the vision and principles of CMS and describe the way it operates, (b) to encourage potential infomediaries and volunteers to apply, and (c) to start planning CMS validations in schools. The road shows featured presentations by the ANSA-EAP team, along with remarks and speeches by politicians, DepEd officials, and other public figures.
- **Audience.** Participants in road shows represented a variety of schools in the region and consisted of students, teachers, school administrators, regional and local DepEd representatives, parents and PTA members, and school staff members. The attendance rate varied from 67 participants in the Zamboanga-Pagadian road show to 245 participants in the Baguio-Benguet road show.
- **Impact.** Road shows were conducted in schools that later participated in the CMS process, and thus one can gauge the effectiveness of this outreach approach. Infomediaries who were interviewed for this report noted that road shows had a very positive effect on schools' subsequent cooperation with the CMS validation process. Because school administrators and stakeholders were already familiar with CMS and witnessed high-profile endorsements of the platform, they welcomed infomediaries and were eager to help them.

### Step 3: Recruiting Infomediaries

To ensure wide national coverage for CMS validations, ANSA-EAP wanted to select infomediaries from different parts of the Philippines. To accomplish the objective, the organization tapped its networks across the country. Here are several examples of its recruitment strategy:

- Because of his work on the Textbook Count project, Mr. Parafina had a long-standing relationship with the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of the Philippines. ANSA-EAP took advantage of these connections to tap and engage young leaders from these organizations in CMS activities.
- Capitalizing on its affiliation with the Ateneo de Manila University, ANSA-EAP approached other universities in the network, recruiting as infomediaries student leaders from the Ateneo de Zamboanga and Ateneo de Naga universities.
- ANSA-EAP also approached individuals who were working for like-minded nongovernmental organizations (for example, Ecolink in Mindanao, Integral Development Services Inc. in North Cotabato, Igorota Foundation in the Cordilleras, and Public Services Labor Independent Confederation) and were willing to allocate some of their organizational resources to the CMS process.

### Step 4: Training Infomediaries

Once infomediaries were selected, ANSA-EAP invited them to participate in a three-day training workshop (figure 6.4). The workshop, conducted in June 2011, was divided into three parts:

- The first day focused on explanations regarding the state of public education in the Philippines and the structure of DepEd. Officials from DepEd provided lectures on various aspects of DepEd's operations, and participants were invited to reflect on the accomplishments and challenges of the public education system.
- The second day of the workshop involved a simulation of a CMS validation at the Eliseo Belen Elementary School in Pampanaga. The infomediaries were accompanied by the ANSA team and several school stakeholders to conduct a trial data validation. Following the exercise, the infomediaries were requested to reflect on their experience and discuss the implementation of CMS in their communities.
- The third day of the program was dedicated to the planning of various CMS activities. In particular, ANSA-EAP provided the infomediaries with detailed guidelines and instructions for the validation process.



*Figure 6.4: Infomediary Training Promotional Piece*

ANSA-EAP offers **8 learning modules** on social accountability and good governance. The modules cover both theory and practical experiences and include a **“Training for Infomediaries.”**



More information is available on ANSA-EAP’s website:

[http://www.ansa-eap.net/assets/792/ANSA-EAP\\_Folio.pdf](http://www.ansa-eap.net/assets/792/ANSA-EAP_Folio.pdf)



Source: ANSA-EAP Folio, <http://www.ansa-eap.net/learning-in-action/ansa-eap-folio-customized-learning-modules-for-social-accountability-and-good-governance/>.

## Step 5: Engaging Volunteers

After completing the training, infomediaries returned to their regions to engage volunteers and coordinate CMS activities with local schools. The infomediaries operated in 14 areas and recruited 1,053 volunteers overall. However, the rates of volunteer engagement varied dramatically from one area to another:

- **Road shows.** In locations where CMS road shows were conducted in advance of the validation process, the mobilization of volunteers did not pose a problem. In Leyte, for example, three infomediaries conducted validations in six schools and had at their disposal more than 200 volunteers. Depending on the size of the school, some validations were attended by 80 volunteers and others by 20.
- **Partnerships with colleges and universities.** Collaborations with local colleges and universities have been particularly helpful for volunteer mobilization (see box 6.1 for an example).

- **Established networks.** In locations where infomediaries belonged to established organizations with a large membership body (such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts), volunteer engagement was relatively smooth. In Dumaguete, for instance, the designated infomediary validated 19 schools with the help of 40 volunteers.
- **Absence of established networks.** In cases where infomediaries lacked a supporting organizational network and could not benefit from road show publicity, volunteer engagement was more challenging. For example, in Iloilo, infomediaries were students in a local university, and they often visited schools alone or in the company of two or three friends.

### ***Box 6.1: The College of Saint Benilde, Manila***

One promising example for partnerships with universities comes from the De La Salle–College of Saint Benilde in Manila. Dr. Antonio Levy Ingles Jr., a theology professor at the college, learned of CMS by accident when he noticed its Facebook page. He found the project interesting and contacted ANSA for further details. After learning more about the project, Dr. Ingles decided to include CMS validations in the community service requirements of his course on morals.

In March 2012, ANSA-EAP conducted a one-day training for Dr. Ingles and his students and coordinated their visits to two public schools in Manila (Marcella Agoncillo Elementary School in Bunondo and Rafael Palma Elementary School in Vito Cruz). One hundred students from Dr. Ingles’s class participated in the validation activities, conducting two rounds of visits to each school.



Source: Courtesy of Check My School.

## Step 6: Coordinating with Schools

A central task assigned to the infomediaries was to select schools in their areas and coordinate the CMS validation activities with them. The selection of schools for the first CMS validation was largely based on two factors: first, the availability of GPS data on a particular school (8,864 of the country's 44,000 schools had this information); second, the presence of infomediaries in a particular area and their preexisting ties to schools (for example, many infomediaries conducted validations in their home elementary and high schools). Validations were eventually undertaken in 14 pilot areas (Baguio, Benguet, Cebu, Cotabato, Dumaguete, Iloilo, Leyte, Manila, Pagadian, Pateros, Rizal, Tacloban, Taguig, and Zamboanga) and covered 243 schools.

As part of the coordination process, infomediaries contacted both local education officials (division supervisors and superintendents) and the administrators of the selected schools. To help the infomediaries establish these contacts, ANSA-EAP provided them with a specific DepEd endorsement for each of the 14 pilot areas. The endorsement letter encouraged “all school heads, school district supervisors, school division/city superintendents and regional directors ... to be actively involved in this validation activity.”

The official DepEd endorsement created a favorable environment for the implementation of the CMS project. The reactions of school administrators and local DepEd officials to the CMS project were therefore largely positive:

- **School administrators.** As discussed previously, school administrators were generally supportive of CMS activities—either because they wanted to cooperate with a DepEd-endorsed project or because of the validation benefits they foresaw. Only one case of an uncooperative principal was mentioned by infomediaries. A principal of a school located in Dumaguete City declined a CMS validation without the presence of the local superintendent. Because the superintendent could not attend the validation, it had to be canceled.
- **DepEd officials.** The official DepEd endorsement of the CMS project helped CMS infomediaries gain the general approval of the local DepEd to CMS activities. Whereas some officials simply approved the validation activities, others actively collaborated with infomediaries. The local division superintendent in Dumaguete, for instance, enthusiastically endorsed the CMS project and agreed to accompany the designated infomediary to all his validation activities in schools. This cooperation considerably facilitated the coordination activities of the infomediary and helped him conduct validations in 19 schools in the city.

The preparatory process for CMS validations is illustrated in figure 6.5.

*Figure 6.5: The Preparatory Process for CMS Validations*



Source: World Bank.

## Step 7: Conducting Community Validations

The original idea of ANSA-EAP was to conduct “synchronized CMS validations” in all 14 pilot areas during two weeks in August 2011. The synchronized validations were supposed to start with festive launching ceremonies and generally resemble the Brigada Eskwela activities (see box 9.1 in section 9). This plan, however, could not be realized because infomediaries had varying coordination and scheduling constraints. Eventually, validation activities were conducted in 243 schools between August and October 2011.

Infomediaries and volunteers arrived at schools equipped with (a) the official DepEd data for the specific school (handed to them by ANSA-EAP) and (b) CMS validation forms that infomediaries filled in as part of the validation.

ANSA-EAP’s instructions for infomediaries were as follows:

- Inquire whether the official DepEd data should be updated and, if necessary, help gather new data.
- Validate the official DepEd data by manually checking and counting the different items covered by CMS. (ANSA-EAP provided infomediaries with precise guidelines as to how this should be done. See appendix B for an example.)
- Discuss the findings with teachers and school administrators.
- Fill in CMS forms and posters, and hang the posters in schools (see figures 6.6 and 6.7).

Figure 6.6: CMS Validation Poster at the J. Lukban Elementary School in Manila

**Checkmyschool.org** FORM 301: CONSOLIDATION OF 900 SCHOOL CLASSIFICATION DATA BASED ON COMMUNITY INSPECTION  
 School Name: J. Lukban Elem. School  
 Address: G. Aguinaldo Bldg., Manila  
 PLEASE PROVIDE RELEVANT DATA AND WRITE CLEARLY.

A. COMPONENT	Score	Weight	Total	B. RISK	Priority
<b>Facilities</b>					
Grade 1 <sup>st</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup>	287	233	436	High	100
Grade 7 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup>	234	108	437	High	1,000
Grade 11 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup>	212	183	334	High	1,000
Grade 13 <sup>th</sup> to 14 <sup>th</sup>	273	101	404	High	1,000
Grade 15	104	107	211	High	1,000
Grade 16	204	230	438	High	1,000
<b>Services</b>					
Grade 1 <sup>st</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	Low	10
Grade 7 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup>	7	3	10	Low	10
Grade 11 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	Low	10
Grade 13 <sup>th</sup> to 14 <sup>th</sup>	2	0	2	Low	10
Grade 15	0	0	0	Low	10
Grade 16	0	0	0	Low	10
<b>Teachers</b>					
Grade 1 <sup>st</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup>	0	0	0	Low	10
Grade 7 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup>	21	16	37	Low	10
Grade 11 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup>	13	26	39	Low	10
Grade 13 <sup>th</sup> to 14 <sup>th</sup>	21	7	28	Low	10
Grade 15	13	18	31	Low	10
Grade 16	2	18	20	Low	10
<b>Other</b>					
Grade 1 <sup>st</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup>	2	1	3	Low	10
Grade 7 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup>	3	2	5	Low	10
Grade 11 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup>	10	0	10	Low	10
Grade 13 <sup>th</sup> to 14 <sup>th</sup>	6	2	8	Low	10
Grade 15	0	1	1	Low	10
Grade 16	0	2	2	Low	10

**REMARKS:**  
 There are enough classrooms for the pupils because several classrooms were merged.  
 -Facilities: classroom of the primary building need repair of the walls, ceiling, and roof.  
 -The ground floor is always flooded during heavy rainfall depending on weather.  
 -The school quadrangle also needs improving because it is lower than the road in front of the school. It gets flooded easily when it rains.

DepEd, BRITISH COUNCIL, GLOBAL, World Bank

Source: World Bank.

Figure 6.7: CMS Validation Posters at the J. Lukban Elementary School in Manila



Source: Photo by Jennifer Shkabatur.

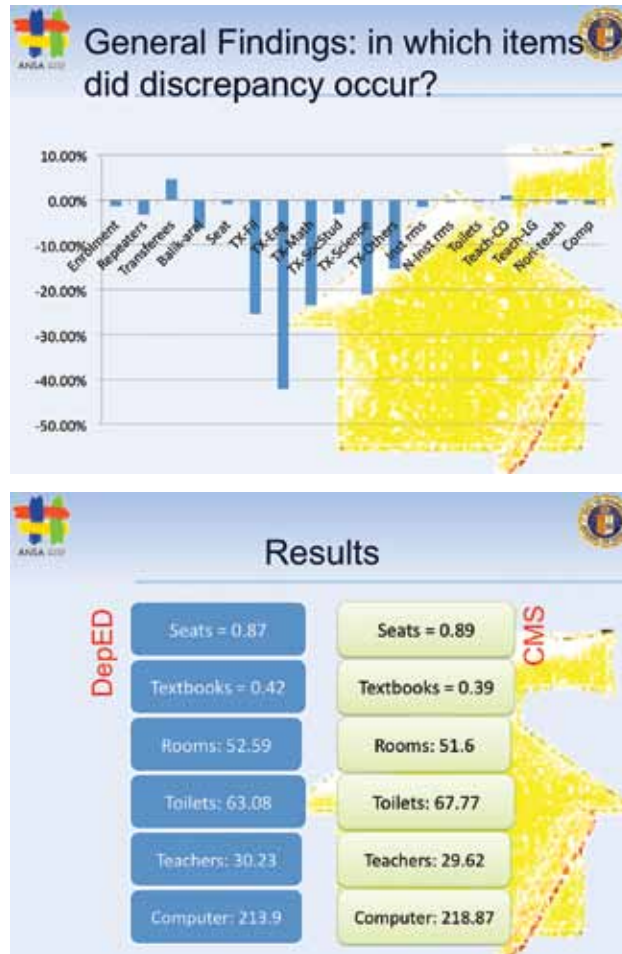


Although these instructions were fairly concrete, infomediaries were not always able to fully follow them. The ways in which validations were conducted varied from one school to another—an aspect that raised concerns with DepEd officials regarding the quality and integrity of the collected data.

Almost all validations identified discrepancies between the official school data provided by DepEd and the data collected as part of the validations (figure 6.8). The reasons for these discrepancies, however, have not always been clear. As noted by Assistant Secretary Laguda, these results were an issue of concern for DepEd:

- In some cases, discrepancies may signal that DepEd’s data are inaccurate and need to be updated.
- In other cases, they may result from counting errors committed by infomediaries or volunteers.
- In yet other cases, discrepancies may be explained by diverging counting methodologies used by ANSA-EAP and DepEd. For example, DepEd officials argue that they count only the latest editions of textbooks, whereas ANSA-EAP instructs volunteers to count all serviceable textbooks.

*Figure 6.8: The Results of the First Cycle of CMS Validations, August–October 2011*



Source: Courtesy of Dondon Parafina.

Overall, the challenges encountered by infomediaries as part of the validation process primarily included time constraints, financial limitations (infomediaries had to pay for all the expenses incurred by volunteers), low volunteer engagement, difficult weather conditions, and uncooperative teachers in some schools. Infomediaries did not mention any large “systemic” problems with the validation process.

## **Steps 8 and 9: Encoding and Processing the Collected Data and Sharing the Data**

After the completion of the validation, infomediaries were supposed to encode the collected data and upload it to the CMS website. This task proved to be challenging for infomediaries, who experienced problems with the website.

As a result, ANSA-EAP became much more involved in the encoding process than originally planned. Infomediaries would send to ANSA-EAP the data they collected via e-mail and then upload photos taken during validation activities on the CMS Facebook page.

## **Step 10: Evaluating the Process**

In October 2011, ANSA organized a two-day workshop where infomediaries could share their experiences from recent validations and assess the effectiveness of the CMS validation process. Each infomediary presented the results of his or her validation activities and discussed the challenges encountered throughout the process.

Aside from the challenges already mentioned, the main concern identified during the evaluation meeting was the malfunction of the CMS website. As a result of discussions with infomediaries, ANSA-EAP decided to fully revamp and relaunch the website for the second cycle of CMS validations.

## **Step 11: Resolving Problems: Operation Thank You**

The original concept of CMS was focused on community monitoring of service provision in schools. Because the primary goal of the project was to validate and improve the integrity of DepEd’s data, the assumption was that the collected information would be valuable on its own.

However, as part of their validation activities in schools, infomediaries identified a variety of shortages and issues of concern. Many of these problems did not result from a discrepancy between the of-

official DepEd data and the data collected by infomediaries. Rather, they were well-known issues that did not receive a satisfactory response from DepEd officials or local divisions.

Although resolution of these issues was not originally a focus of the CMS project design, infomediaries proactively identified 231 issues that required resolution in 84 schools. Typical problems included lack of classrooms (see figure 6.9), lack of textbooks, and facilities that required repair.

*Figure 6.9: Example of Problems Identified in Schools*



Source: Courtesy of Check My School.

Note: Because of the shortage of classrooms at the Esteban S. Javellana Memorial High School, Calinog, Iloilo, classes are held outdoors.

Following the evaluation workshop with infomediaries conducted in October 2011, ANSA-EAP decided on a rather ad hoc basis to enhance the scope of the CMS project and help schools resolve these issues. Mr. Parafina explained that this effort was a “way to express gratitude to participating schools for their collaboration with CMS.” The newly established Operation Thank You was supposed to proceed as follows:

- First, ANSA-EAP, the infomediaries, or both would report the identified problems to DepEd and other authorities in a written form. If the authorities did not respond, up to two follow-up letters would be sent, and then the issue would be brought to the media (however, this never happened, even if authorities were nonresponsive).
- Second, ANSA-EAP, the infomediaries, or both would approach CSOs and private sector organizations and ask them for help.



Operation Thank You was not part of the original design of CMS in the first pilot year, but it emerged as an interesting added value to the project. In the majority of cases, infomediaries reported to the authorities only a handful of problems, and typically they did not hear back from authorities and did not send follow-up letters. Still, several resolutions were achieved:

- The validation conducted in the Putik Central School in Zamboanga City revealed serious cracks in one of the school's buildings. CMS's infomediaries, together with the school principal, documented the situation and reported to ANSA-EAP. The latter sent the report to the Department of Public Works and Highways. Although the department took some time to respond, it eventually sent a team to inspect the building and then recommended immediate renovation.
- A CMS validation in the Araullo High School and in the Epifanio Delos Santos Elementary School in Manila exposed the bad condition of toilets in the schools. The infomediary who validated the schools, Ms. Emma de Mesa, was familiar with DepEd officials from her previous work with PTAs in Manila, and she sent a formal complaint to the responsible departments in November 2011. Both departments responded, and one of them conducted inspections. In January 2012, the department allocated funds and started renovation of the toilets.
- In a different case, a solution was found outside the DepEd. A community validation that was conducted in the Lt. Andres Calungsod Elementary School in Cotabato exposed the poor conditions of one of the toilets (see figure 6.10). Ramel Palapo, the infomediary who validated the school, happened to be an alumnus. When he attended an alumni meeting in the fall of 2011, he mentioned the problem to his past classmates. As a result, the alumni group independently collected money and funded the renovation of the toilet.

*Figure 6.10: Problems with Toilets in Schools*



Source: Courtesy of Check My School.

These results show the potential of Operation Thank You. Moving forward, CMS could benefit considerably from a more institutionalized approach to problem solving. ANSA-EAP could develop a detailed offline and online strategy to identify problems in schools and help with their resolution, thereby turning problem identification and solution into an independent activity that is not necessarily tied to data validation in schools. Several factors support taking this direction:

- First, the accomplishments of Operation Thank You show that the connections of the ANSA-EAP team and the CMS infomediaries with DepEd officials and local representatives can be of considerable value for schools without imposing a high time commitment on ANSA-EAP or the infomediaries.
- Second, interviews with school administrators and infomediaries reveal that the prospect of getting help with some of the school's problems is a major incentive for school administrators to cooperate with CMS validations.
- Third, in line with the general "school-based management" policy, local communities and the private sector can serve as an important resource for schools and a promising asset for future CMS activities.
- Fourth, because DepEd directs schools to become more self-reliant and learn to solve problems on their own by engaging community stakeholders, the online CMS platform could serve as a valuable problem-solving tool in the hands of school administrators.

## **Step 12: Presenting Data to DepEd and Education Stakeholders**

The CMS team presented the results of the validation process to DepEd officials and other leaders in the education community in January 2012. They shared with the education stakeholders the validated data, deliberated over the findings in different schools, and discussed the ongoing Operation Thank You.

In the next validation cycles, the CMS findings will be similarly shared with DepEd officials, offering them constructive feedback about the state of public schools and inviting them to respond to identified issues. Then, the findings will be presented to an even larger audience of stakeholders—policy makers, CSOs, school representatives, and community members—to ensure the accountability of the CMS project to the general public.

# 7

## Lessons from the First Phase: CMS 1.0

The CMS project has been active for little more than a year, and it is still in a growing and learning phase. However, several preliminary lessons can be drawn from its first year of implementation.

### Enabling Conditions

The four pillars of social accountability articulated by ANSA<sup>9</sup> accurately capture the major enabling conditions for CMS (and other projects of its type):

- **Organized and capable citizen groups—ANSA-EAP’s existing networks.** The mobilization of committed and diligent infomediaries and volunteers is a major hurdle for any community monitoring initiative. ANSA-EAP was largely immune from this problem; the affiliation of ANSA-EAP with the Ateneo School of Government and its own local networks allowed ANSA-EAP to effectively publicize CMS as part of road shows and then engage infomediaries from all over the country. ANSA-EAP’s ability to effectively tap local networks of CSOs, youth groups, and socially active individuals makes it uniquely suitable for the implementation of projects such as CMS.
- **Government champions who are willing to engage—DepEd’s endorsement.** Not only was the support of DepEd important in obtaining official school data, but it was also paramount in gaining the cooperation of school administrators and local division superintendents. DepEd’s support opened the doors of multiple schools across the country for infomediaries.
- **Context and cultural appropriateness—community-centered approach in the education sector.** The recurring theme expressed by all DepEd officials, school administrators, and infomediaries who were interviewed for this report was that communities should be more involved in the management of schools. DepEd’s efforts to implement its decentralization reform and the pressure

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<sup>9</sup> See section 3 for full discussion.

on school administrators to actively engage community stakeholders in their school's management create a highly conducive environment for community monitoring projects such as CMS.

- **Access to information.** The CMS project would not have been possible without the availability of official data about public schools in the Philippines. Although the ANSA-EAP team still had to process the data, clean it up, and consolidate it on a single online platform, the ability to access numerous governmental data sets that contained largely reliable and complete information about the public education sector was a major enabling factor for the project. Such access was possible despite the lack of right-to-information legislation or a comprehensive open-government data policy in the country.

## Successful Aspects of CMS

Despite its relatively brief history, CMS has had a number of successes:

- **Cooperation with DepEd.** After one year of operation, and despite several reservations expressed by DepEd officials, ANSA-EAP's cooperation with DepEd is solid. This relationship is definitely one of the strongest elements of CMS' success.
- **Creation of new links.** Facilitation of the vertical engagement between the local government bodies (including schools) and the community-based citizen groups and CSOs was equally as important as the horizontal links among some government agencies. Engagement of principals, teachers, and parents was an important part of multistakeholder relationship building.
- **Community mobilization strategy.** As previously mentioned, ANSA-EAP's connections and prior experience allowed it to effectively publicize the CMS project in several pilot areas and to mobilize effective infomediaries and volunteers.
- **Selection of local infomediaries.** CMS has been implemented as a nationwide project in public schools that may differ widely from one another. To account for these idiosyncrasies, ANSA-EAP recruited infomediaries who were intimately familiar with the schools they validated. This strategy allowed infomediaries to understand intuitively how to approach the schools and how to conduct validation activities.
- **Capacity building and training.** The capacity-building and training activities conducted by ANSA-EAP were highly commendable. Infomediaries admitted that CMS trainings not only prepared them for school validations, but also granted them valuable knowledge, along with improved organizing and leadership skills.
- **Simple design.** Because CMS validations are led by decentralized local networks, their design should be simple and easily transferable, yet rigorous. Despite the concerns expressed by DepEd, CMS seems to have accomplished this objective and developed a validation system that can be both easily followed by volunteers on the ground and monitored by the CMS team and DepEd officials.

- **Flexibility.** The ANSA-EAP team effectively adjusted to a variety of unforeseen developments and took advantage of new opportunities during the pilot CMS implementation. When the website did not perform as expected, ANSA-EAP turned its attention to the Facebook page. When intermediaries identified problems that schools had been struggling with, ANSA-EAP launched and provided support to the Operation Thank You program.
- **Self-assessment.** During the pilot year of CMS implementation, ANSA-EAP was constantly engaged in self-assessment, attempting to learn from mistakes and improve the system for future validations. Although the CMS project (in particular, its online component) did not perform fully as expected during the pilot year, the flexible and open-minded approach endorsed by ANSA-EAP is likely to substantially improve the project for its subsequent iterations.

# 8

## Challenges

Naturally enough for a pilot phase of the project, the first CMS validation encountered several implementation challenges. Some of the major issues are discussed here.

### Data Quality and Verification

Some of the interviewed DepEd officials expressed concerns regarding the quality of the data collected by CMS as part of its validation processes. Because DepEd officials were not confident about the reasons for the discrepancies between their own data and the data collected by CMS, they could not fully trust the data presented to them by CMS. In preparation for the second validation cycle, CMS has collaborated with DepEd on the development of mutually acceptable standards for validations, a process that is likely to alleviate DepEd's concerns.

Related concerns that were expressed by DepEd officials referred to the substance of the collected data. Assistant Secretary Reynaldo Laguda noted that quantitative data may not be sufficient to understand the problems of the schools and explain potential discrepancies between official DepEd information and CMS data. He therefore urged CMS to systematically collect qualitative, and not only quantitative, data.

### ICT Use and Capabilities

The use of technology during the first pilot year of CMS has been limited for various reasons, and the CMS website encountered several technical challenges. Because Internet penetration in the Philippines is estimated at around 30 percent and the general technological capabilities are relatively low, effectively incorporating ICT into pilot CMS activities is challenging.

Taking into account these inherent limitations, ANSA-EAP is currently redesigning the CMS website, aiming to adjust it to the Philippine ICT use reality (see section 9 for a description of the new website). As of this writing, the website is still under development and school profiles are largely unpopulated. Assessing the effectiveness and functionality of the new website is therefore difficult. However, the conceptual concern remains valid. Even if the website becomes more user friendly, the extent to which community members will be able and willing to effectively use the platform to voice their concerns and stand up for their rights as part of their ongoing relations with school administrators, local officials, and DepEd executives is not wholly clear. In many cases, the challenge may be one of capacity: local communities may not have sufficient Internet access or technological skills to access and use the information on the platform. In other cases, even if technological capacity exists, communities may be unaware of their rights or reluctant to use the information to confront persons in authority or engage in negotiations with them.

Skillful and organized collective action therefore seems to be a prerequisite for the effective use of the information provided on the CMS platform. Given this reality, ANSA-EAP's approach of iterative self-assessment and experimentation with different ICT tools (for example, using Facebook when the main website does not work and redesigning the main website) is promising and should be further pursued in the next validation cycles.

## **Problem-Solving Mechanisms**

The original objective of CMS was to validate the official DepEd data and not necessarily to help schools solve their problems; therefore, problem-solving mechanisms were not embedded in the original CMS design. Problem solving was an additional benefit that grew out of the validation process. Building on this emerging opportunity, ANSA-EAP launched Operation Thank You on an ad hoc basis as a "gift" to the validated schools, rather than as an integral part of the CMS project. For this reason, most informants exhibited less persistence in reporting and following up on schools' problems than in their activities around the "official" validation process. Nonetheless, Operation Thank You achieved several successes and helped resolve some of the problems identified in schools.

In light of this experience, a more structured incorporation of problem-solving mechanisms in the CMS project should be undertaken. Such mechanisms can be particularly important because many school principals collaborate with CMS with an expectation that the project will help them resolve some of their issues. Moreover, the basic framework introduced by ANSA-EAP as part of Operation Thank You (contacting authorities or potentially helpful community members and following up with them until the problem is solved) seems to be effective. Hence, if ANSA-EAP is interested in pursuing this direction, problem-solving mechanisms should be better structured and institutionalized.

## Sustainability of CMS and the Partnerships among Stakeholders

In general, the strategy of ANSA-EAP to structure its activities around existing local networks of volunteers is very promising for sustainability purposes and for driving citizen engagement in the project. Ensuring the sustainability of CMS may nonetheless present a challenging task. Several aspects should be considered as part of this issue:

- **Infomediaries.** During its first implementation phase, CMS largely relied on infomediaries who volunteered to participate in the project and lead validation activities. Because infomediaries self-selected, their mobilization capacities differed dramatically: those who represented established organizations or had sufficient experience with community organizing were more likely to recruit volunteers and conduct rigorous validations, compared with infomediaries who lacked similar institutional support or experience. Furthermore, in the future, the long-term commitment of infomediaries who are not compensated by ANSA-EAP and who are likely to have other time-consuming responsibilities may be difficult to sustain. ANSA-EAP decided to deal with this challenge by recruiting for its next validation cycle only infomediaries who represent organizations or who have a proven community mobilization record. However, although this strategy may be promising for volunteer mobilization, it does not necessarily secure the long-term commitment of these infomediaries.
- **DepEd.** Despite some reservations regarding quality of the collected data, DepEd officials seem to be very supportive of CMS. Because this support is central for the sustainability of the project, ANSA-EAP should make sure to preserve it, even if doing so requires introducing changes in the way validations are conducted.
- **Dependence on ANSA-EAP.** The ANSA-EAP team played a central and highly active role in all CMS-related activities during the CMS pilot year. All the data collected by infomediaries was sent to the ANSA-EAP team, which compiled, processed, and analyzed it. Furthermore, the team played a central role in implementing Operation Thank You, by sending letters to and following up with relevant authorities. Although this dependence on ANSA-EAP may be natural for a pilot year, it seems problematic from a sustainability perspective, especially if substantially more schools take part in the next phases of the project.



# The Next Phase: CMS 2.0

Learning from the accomplishments and challenges of the first CMS pilot, ANSA-EAP has posed several strategic objectives for the next CMS iteration: systemizing the CMS process, revamping the structure to meet scale, fully realizing the ICT potential of CMS, and enhancing the sustainability of CMS.

## Systemizing the CMS Process

ANSA-EAP works on the creation of detailed guidelines and protocols that capture the essence of the CMS process. The objective of this systematization effort is twofold: first, to be able to share the “CMS know-how” with interested actors in other public sectors or in other countries; second, to respond to DepEd’s critique regarding the quality of the validation process.

As part of the CMS know-how objective and in preparation for the next CMS cycle, the ANSA-EAP team has already started to develop uniform and detailed protocols of procedures that should be followed by area coordinators, infomediaries, and volunteers. These protocols outline concrete procedures about how the CMS project should be put into operation. The protocols explain how to coordinate school visits, how to establish relationships with local division superintendents, which forms should be brought to the schools on validation days, and what items should be counted in each school.

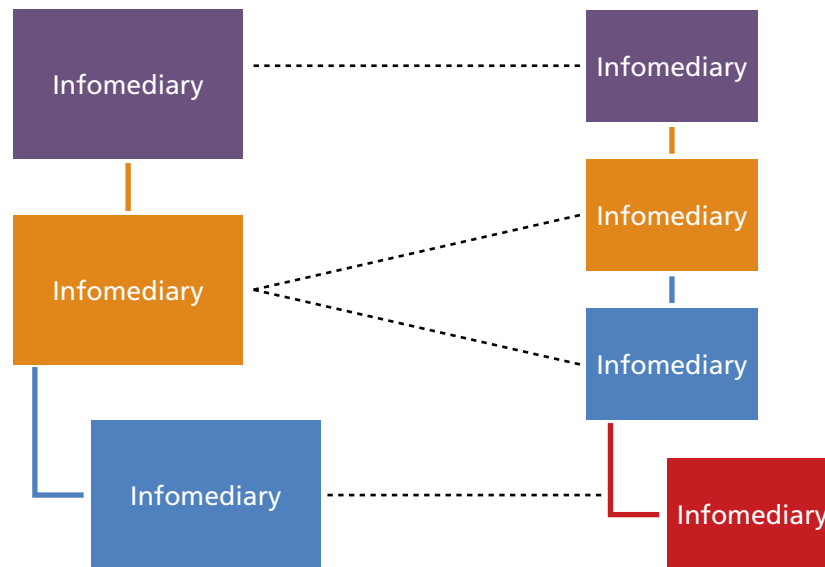
As part of the data-quality objective, CMS is undertaking considerable steps to improve the quality of its validations and respond to DepEd’s concerns. CMS came to an agreement with DepEd in which the parties committed to closely coordinate on the improvement of tools and methodologies used as part of the validation activities in schools, thereby ensuring the alignment of CMS data with DepEd’s standards and preventing validation mistakes.

## Revamping the Structure to Meet Scale

To scale up the activities of CMS and make the project less dependent on the small ANSA-EAP team, ANSA-EAP has initiated a decentralization scheme. As part of this scheme, it introduced an additional layer of authority, known as area coordinators. This position has been offered to infomediaries who worked on CMS in 2011 and to newly recruited volunteers with experience in community mobilization.

ANSA-EAP decided to delegate to area coordinators several responsibilities (see figure 9.1). They will have to recruit infomediaries in their respective areas, train them, and oversee their validation activities. They will also establish and maintain connections with local education officials—the division superintendent and district supervisor. These connections are then supposed to help area coordinators solve the problems identified in schools in their areas. Under the new scheme, infomediaries will be responsible only for validations in particular schools (the new organizational structure of CMS is depicted in appendix A).

*Figure 9.1: The New Delegated Structure of CMS*



Source: ANSA-EAP 2012, 10.

To ensure that area coordinators are capable of performing these functions, ANSA-EAP intends to recruit for this position individuals who represent established CSOs or groups (such as the Boy Scouts) or who have proved that they can independently mobilize volunteers and engage communities (for the most part, community leaders experienced with the first CMS pilot).

## Fully Realizing the ICT Potential of CMS

Another major strategic objective pursued by CMS in preparation for its second validation cycle is realizing the full ICT potential of the project. The new CMS website aims to feature the following functions:

- *Interactive map* with all public schools for which GPS data are available
- *Detailed profiles* for each school, containing the following: basic contact information, DepEd official data for the school, data collected by CMS, photos and videos of the school, and the school's major management documents (for example, school improvement plan and school report cards). Furthermore, the school profiles will contain a tab named "variance," where discrepancies between official DepEd data and CMS data will be highlighted, with accompanying notes that explain possible reasons for the variance, and another tab dubbed "needs," where the particular needs of the school will be described (figure 9.2).
- *News section* where stories and photos from recent CMS activities will be featured
- *Archive section* where BEIS and other DepEd data will be stored

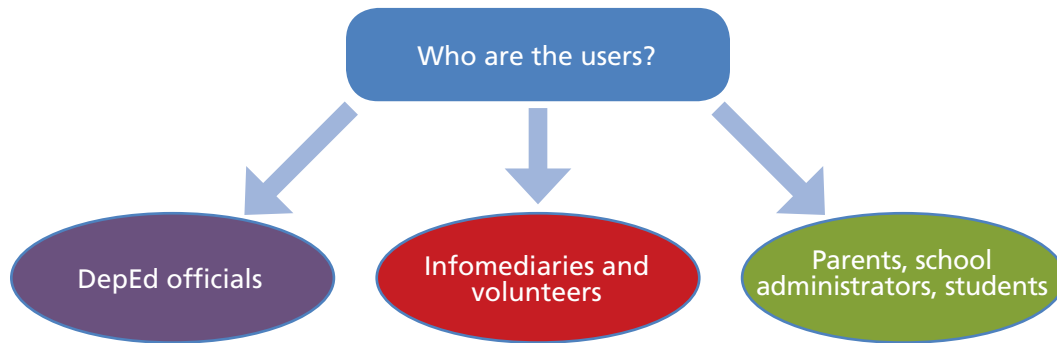
Figure 9.2: The Development Version of CMS, as of June 7, 2012



Source: Checkmyschool.org.

As the new CMS website is being developed, ANSA-EAP is considering the addition of more ICT functions and tools, aiming to expand the range of potential users of the website, facilitate the ways in which the website can be accessed, and fully realize the potential of social media (figure 9.3).

**Figure 9.3: Expanding the User Base**



Source: World Bank.

Currently, the new website is designed to satisfy the needs of two major actors:

- *DepEd officials*, who are interested in easy access to the data collected by CMS and in the discrepancies between the CMS data and the official DepEd data
- *Infomediaries*, who flagged the need for a fast platform and user-friendly interface that will enable them to quickly upload the collected data and share their photos and videos from the validation activities

To attract users to the website and satisfy the needs of additional types of users (see figure 9.3), ANSA-EAP is considering the incorporation of the following functions:

- To capture the attention of school administrators, for instance, the website may have to feature the contact details of CSOs or community members who are willing to help the school in one way or another or provide information about other types of community resources.
- *Parents* may benefit from the website if it includes concrete calls for action, discussion forums with teachers, or other helpful materials.
- *Students and volunteers* could be attracted to the website if it features activities that are of personal interest to them—social activities in schools, class and exam materials, designated discussion forums, and the like.

Because Internet connectivity is still low in many regions in the Philippines, the access challenge can be addressed in at least two ways:

- **Social mobilization.** The approach currently pursued by ANSA-EAP is to assign the responsibility for online updates to the infomediary who conducts validations in the community. Another possibility would be to assign this responsibility to the school governing council or the PTA of each school. Because these entities are organized and have clearly defined stakes in the management of the school,

- they may be well positioned to undertake this effort (although schools in better-off locations are clearly better positioned for such an exercise than schools located in areas with poor Internet access).
- **Increased mobile penetration.** An additional direction that ANSA-EAP is pursuing is the incorporation of easy-to-use mobile features that would strengthen the website performance and enhance its audience. Because mobile penetration is close to 100 percent in the Philippines, this direction may yield promising results.

## Enhancing the Sustainability of CMS

ANSA-EAP is considering several steps to enhance the sustainability of CMS in its next validation cycles:

- **Entering partnerships with established institutions.** ANSA-EAP has been successfully building partnership relations with established CSOs and universities. This strategy aims to help mobilize volunteers and ensure long-term support of the project. ANSA-EAP's collaboration with the College of Saint Benilde seems to be particularly promising in this respect (see box 6.1 in section 6). The inclusion of CMS validations as part of course curricula provides students ample incentives to excel in validations and ensures a sustainable flow of volunteers to the CMS project.
- **Further incorporating CMS into established community activities.** As part of the community-centered approach, BESRA implementation, and other decentralization policies, DepEd has been supporting a variety of community-driven activities in schools. Some of these activities, such as the Brigada Eskwela, are well established and have been ongoing in schools around the country for several years (see box 9.1). ANSA-EAP is exploring how CMS-related activities can be incorporated in these larger community events.
- **Tapping into the private sector.** To generate revenues, ANSA-EAP may consider turning to the private sector. Because private sector engagement in school management has been commended in interviews with both DepEd officials and school administrators, private companies may be willing to sponsor CMS activities in different localities as a way of advertising, without compromising the integrity and rigor of the CMS project. ANSA-EAP is already well positioned to pursue this direction, because its team has benefited from positive collaborations with the private sector as part of the Textbook Count project and the partnership with Coca-Cola.
- **Sharing the CMS know-how.** Although CMS is a very young pilot project, several governments have already expressed interest in replicating it in their own countries. ANSA-EAP is considering sharing with them its CMS know-how and general expertise in social accountability-focused projects. As part of this process, ANSA-EAP is well positioned to offer three types of advice:
  - *General assessment framework.* Although the CMS framework is well suited for the Philippines, it may be less appropriate for other countries. A valuable service provided by CMS can be an assessment framework that would help replicating organizations understand which features of CMS are likely to work in their countries, which aspects should be altered, and which procedures should be abandoned.

- *Blended approach.* The CMS project combines robust citizen monitoring strategies with the incorporation of ICT tools. Because creating a balanced integration of these two components may be challenging, the experience of ANSA-EAP in this sphere can be very helpful for other countries replicating the initiative. Aside from sharing its CMS expertise, ANSA-EAP could also share knowledge on capacity building and help replicating bodies pursue its “blended approach.”
- *Clear implementation guidelines.* For its second validation cycle, ANSA-EAP is developing detailed guidelines with concrete instructions and procedures that explain the implementation of the CMS project. Replicating parties can benefit greatly from such guidelines, especially if they are customized for local needs.

### **Box 9.1: Brigada Eskwela**

The Brigada Eskwela project that is implemented every year in schools throughout the Philippines is an example of the community-centered approach in the education sector. Shortly before the beginning of the school year, all of a school’s stakeholders (parents, teachers, students, local politicians, local CSOs, youth groups, and the like) gather in the school to help prepare it for the new year. They take days off from work to help repair and clean the school’s facilities and donate to the school a variety of items (paint, furniture, computers, and more).

The Brigada Eskwela project is widely advertised on radio and television, and it is enthusiastically endorsed by DepEd officials and local politicians. It is launched every year in May with a festive ceremony and in the presence of high-profile public figures. CMS validations and problem-solving activities could be held in schools as part of the Brigada Eskwela events.



Source: Photo by Jennifer Shkabatur.

# 10

## Recommendations for Replicating CMS in Other Countries

CMS is a very young pilot project, but it has already captured considerable attention from governments, CSOs, and donors around the world. This attention results in part from a convergence of the following factors: the latest trends in increased interest to engage with civil society, growing commitments of governments worldwide to release data and increase transparency, and amplified use and declining cost of ICT tools.

The growth of the Open Government Partnership (OGP)<sup>10</sup> over the past year as the central multi-lateral initiative encouraging governments to become more transparent has created impetus for participating governments that are seeking to fulfill their OGP commitments to view CMS favorably. For example, as part of its open government initiative, the Kenyan government is in the process of releasing all of its data to the public and streamlining various databases. To facilitate use of this information within the education sector, the government is adapting the CMS model to its own context. The same process is taking place in Moldova as the country seeks to use data innovations for transforming governance. In Indonesia, ANSA-EAP provides technical and strategic support for the development of the Indonesian adaptation of CMS, which is called *Ceksekolahku*. In each country, interest in CMS stems from the government's interest in advancing open data innovations under the OGP umbrella.

Nonetheless, although the CMS framework is well suited for the Philippines, it may be less appropriate for other countries. CMS was developed for the Philippines, taking into account its political conditions and social intricacies and benefiting from ANSA-EAP's networks and status. These features are likely to be very different in other countries. Fitting the CMS framework into a new political and social context therefore requires a nuanced and careful analysis. However, given the high enthusiasm about CMS, the opportunity for scaling up and implementing it in other countries should not be missed. The lessons learned by CMS during its first pilot year can therefore be illuminating for replicating parties.

First, a successful adaptation of CMS requires a *dedicated CSO leader* who would assess the suitability of CMS to a particular country context and adjust the CMS approach to the local sociopolitical conditions. As part of this process, the CSO should undertake the task of customizing the CMS design,

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<sup>10</sup> For more information, visit <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/>.

building capacity, addressing technological challenges, mobilizing resources, leading the implementation of the project, and ensuring its sustainability.

Second, the *constructive engagement* approach should be pursued. Whereas civil society initiatives often take an adversarial stance by attempting to expose governmental faults and show where public officials fail, the CMS vision is considerably different. It emphasizes the need to engage public officials and civil society groups in a sustained dialogue and collaborative problem solving. The constructive engagement component of CMS needs as much attention as CMS's technical requirements.

Third, *capacity building* should be an integral part of the project design, development, and implementation aimed at adapting or customizing CSM in another context or country. One cannot assume that potential partners or counterparts engaged in a CMS adaptation will have the necessary capacity to design, implement, and sustain the CMS project as a continuing undertaking and action-oriented advocacy. A capacity-building perspective is therefore important in planning the assistance and support to replicating partners.

Fourth, in line with ANSA's *social accountability pillars*,<sup>11</sup> the CMS project was made possible because of four major enabling conditions. The presence of these conditions would be necessary for CMS-related projects in replicating countries as well.

- **Organized and capable citizen groups.** ANSA-EAP's ability to effectively engage local networks of CSOs, youth groups, and socially active individuals made CMS activities possible. Because validation activities in schools around the country are the core of the CMS project, the existence and commitment of such local networks are necessary for replication of the project. The absence of such networks does not imply, however, that the project is doomed. Rather, it means that CMS replicators should invest considerable effort in identifying potential partners, building the capacity of potential local collaborators, forming alliances with existing CSOs, and looking for promising entry points into youth groups or other active individuals. Furthermore, after civil society collaborators have been identified, CMS replicators should invest resources in training them and familiarizing them with the design and implementation principles of the project. As the CMS experience in the Philippines shows, this aspect is key to the success of the whole endeavor.
- **Government champions who are willing to engage.** The Philippine CMS project was possible because of DepEd's endorsement. The support of DepEd was not only important in obtaining official school data, but also paramount in gaining the cooperation of school administrators and allowing infomediaries to conduct intrusive validations. Any replication of CMS should therefore start from the identification of a government partner who would support the project's activities and collaborate closely with the project throughout the implementation stages.
- **Context and cultural appropriateness.** All DepEd officials, school administrators, and infomediaries who were interviewed for this report emphasized that communities should be more involved in the management of schools. This attitude toward community engagement and decentralization created fertile ground for CMS implementation in different localities in the Philippines. A similar sociopolitical environment could be favorable in replicating countries as well.

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<sup>11</sup> See section 3 for full discussion.



- **Access to information.** The CMS project would not have been possible without the availability of official data about public schools in the Philippines. The existence of digitized and accessible government records is therefore a necessary precondition for the replication of CMS. As the experience of CMS shows, ad hoc releases of information may be sufficient for this purpose, and the lack of right-to-information legislation or a coherent open data policy does not prevent the project's implementation.

Fifth, the *ICT-related components* of CMS replications should be carefully considered. As the CMS pilot in the Philippines shows, although ICT presents a great opportunity for developing countries, it can also pose considerable implementation challenges. The incorporation of ICT in societies with low rates of Internet penetration and lack of technological skills is particularly difficult. The CMS experience can be illuminating in this respect, because it shows the need for versatility and flexibility in the integration of ICT tools in citizen monitoring projects. Whereas ANSA-EAP benefited from strong local networks and added the online CMS component only later on, many CMS replications start differently: replicating organizations first obtain data and launch an online platform and only then try to establish their offline presence and create connections with local partners and networks. The vast experience of ANSA-EAP in this sphere can help greatly. ANSA-EAP can also provide lessons on networking and help replicating bodies to pursue the blended approach that the network has followed in various domains. Because ICT-enabled civil society initiatives are relatively new around the world (and in particular in developing countries), no single toolkit explains how to successfully incorporate ICT tools into social accountability projects. Replicating parties should learn from the experience of ANSA-EAP and take into account its accomplishments and difficulties, including its plans for CMS 2.0.

Sixth, replicating parties may consider expanding the scope of CMS as part of their *adaptation and customization activities*. The access to data on public schools provides a unique advantage that should be realized in full. Thus, although validating data is an important goal of a project such as CMS, the data can be used for additional purposes, such as monitoring budgetary allocations and expenditures per school (see, for example, an Indian civil society initiative described in the Web link in appendix C).

# Conclusion

CMS represents an inspiring and innovative example of community monitoring of service delivery in Philippine public schools (box 11.1). The goal of this case study was to explore CMS's current setup and to suggest how it could be improved and replicated. One cannot overemphasize that CMS has just completed its first pilot year, and the project is still in its growing and learning phase. Therefore, evaluating the effectiveness of CMS and its effect on service provision in public schools is premature. With these caveats taken into account, the major findings of the case study follow.

### ***Box 11.1: Media Coverage of Check My School***

Check My School has received an array of international coverage, including references in the *Guardian*; a recent TEDGlobal talk; and many blogs related to development, technology, and innovation.

Caroline Anstey, managing director of the World Bank, penned a piece titled "New Technology Can Democratise Development," which used Check My School as a key example of how CSOs have innovated with technology to achieve better and more efficient service delivery.

To view the *Guardian* article, go to <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/nov/29/technology-can-democractise-development>.

First, the CMS project started with the signing of an MoA between ANSA-EAP and DepEd. As part of the memorandum, DepEd fully endorsed CMS, committing to share with ANSA-EAP all its available data on public schools and helping it establish relations with schools. This cooperation with DepEd is one of the most important and promising features of CMS. The support of DepEd was not only important in obtaining official school data, but also paramount in gaining the cooperation of school administrators and local division superintendents and opening the doors of multiple schools across the country for infomediaries.

Second, ANSA-EAP took full advantage of its partners and networks in various locations in the Philippines. The ability of the CMS team to effectively tap into local networks of CSOs, youth groups, and socially active individuals made the implementation of CMS possible. The effectiveness of ANSA-EAP's networking approach is also promising as part of the scaling-up efforts for CMS.

Third, the CMS project seems to fit well within the current sociopolitical environment in the Philippines. DepEd's efforts to implement its decentralization reform and the pressure on school administrators to actively engage community stakeholders in their school's management create a highly conducive environment for community monitoring projects such as CMS.

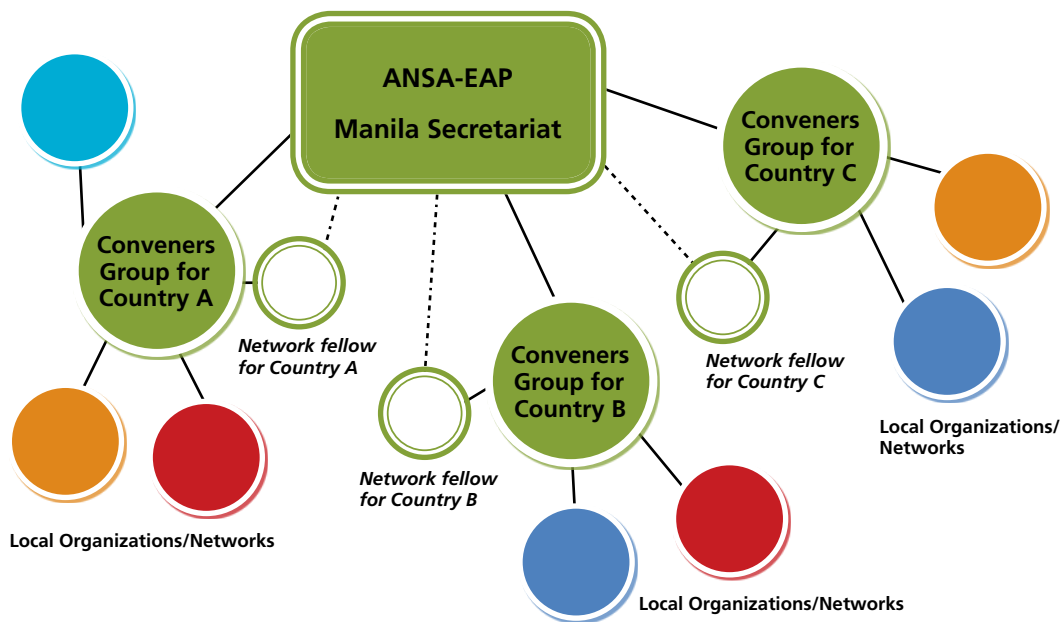
Fourth, the offline components of the project and its online implementation have diverged. The offline strategy of CMS has largely been effective and has already yielded positive results. The materialization of the online strategy of the project has been more challenging. Because the main CMS website was less functional than expected, ANSA-EAP has been experimenting with various ICT tools throughout the pilot year, aiming to adjust the ICT components of CMS to the reality on the ground. In the context of a developing country with low rates of Internet penetration and relatively limited technological capabilities, this approach seems to be both plausible and promising. The effort to identify the best-fitting ICT strategy for CMS should continue throughout the next cycles of CMS validations.

# Appendixes

# A

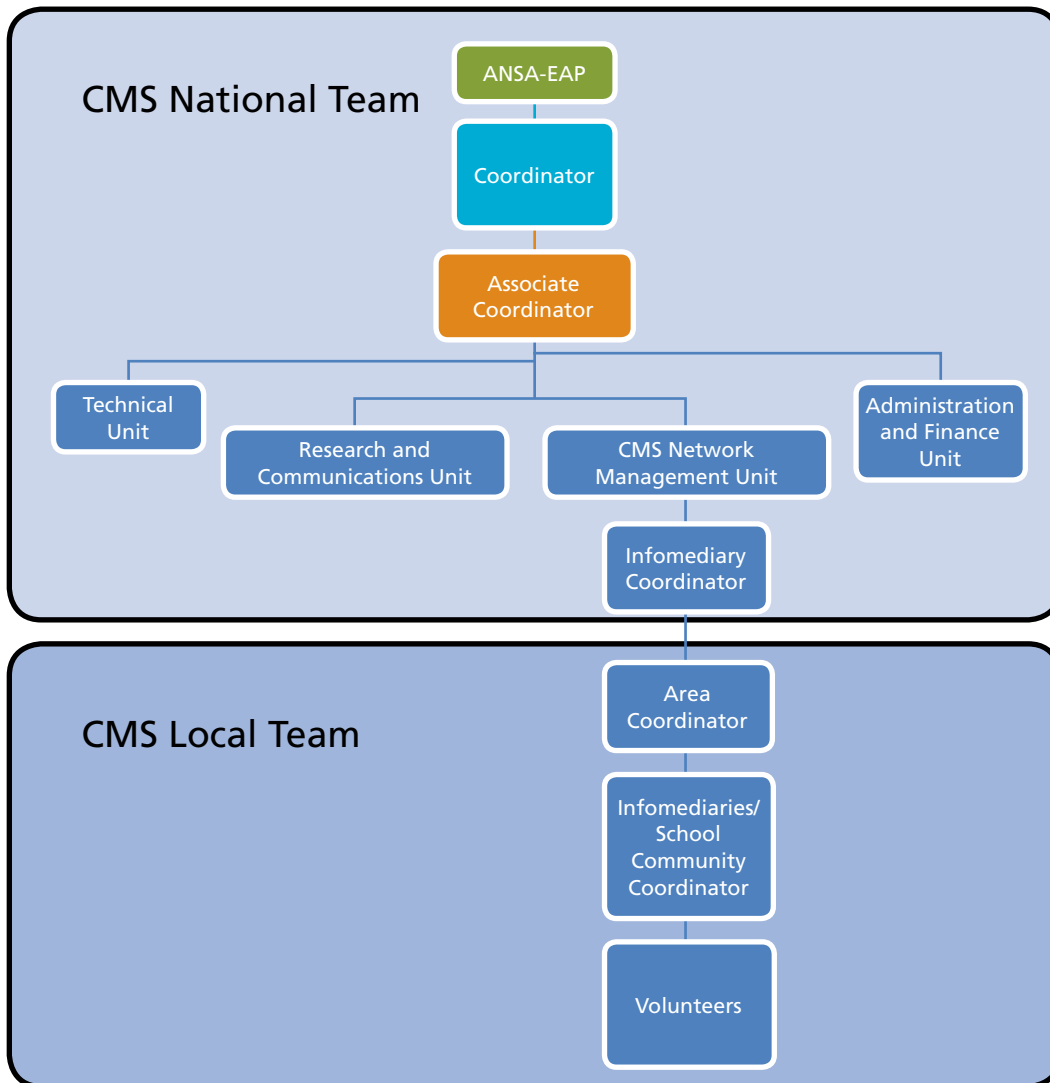
## Organizational Structure of ANSA-EAP and CMS

Figure A.1: ANSA-EAP Organizational Structure



Source: ANSA-EAP 2011a.

Figure A.2: CMS 2.0 Organizational Structure



Source: ANSA-EAP 2012.

# B

## ANSA-EAP's Validation Guidelines for Specific Items



### D. TEXTBOOKS

**Title:** name of the textbook found on the cover page

*Pangalan ng libro na makikita sa pabalat.*

**Quantity:** number of **serviceable** textbooks; to be counted, a book should be in good condition or damage should be tolerable

*Maayos at nagagamit na libro; dapat ay nasa maayos itong kalagayan o bahagya lang ang sira.*

**Total (all titles):** combined number of all serviceable textbooks from available titles

*Pinagsamang bilang ng lahat ng maaayos at nagagamit na libro.*

**Other subjects:** textbooks used in subjects other than those listed

*Libro na ginagamit sa mga subjects na di nabanggit sa listahan.*

## E. ROOMS

**Instructional rooms:** rooms used for teaching and instruction

*Silid na ginagamit sa pagtuturo.*

**Academic classrooms:** rooms for regular classes

*Silid para sa mga klase.*

**Science laboratories:** rooms used for scientific experiments

*Silid para sa mga scientific experiments.*

**Home economics (HE) rooms:** rooms used to teach HE classes

*Silid para sa mga klase sa HE.*

**Industrial workshops:** rooms to teach industrial arts classes

*Silid para sa pagtuturo ng klase sa industrial arts.*

**Computer rooms:** rooms used to teach computer classes

*Silid para sa klase sa computer.*

**Not currently used:** rooms that are in proper condition but not being used for any kind of teaching or instruction

*Silid na maayos ang kalagayan pero di ginagamit sa klase.*

**Non-instructional rooms:** rooms not used for teaching or instruction

*Silid na di ginagamit sa pagtuturo.*

**Libraries:** rooms where books are kept and made available for lending to students

*Silid kung saan iniingatan ang mga libro na pinapahiram sa mag-aaral.*

**Clinic:** rooms that provide medical relief

*Silid na ginagamit sa pagbibigay ng tulong-medikal.*

**Canteen:** rooms where food is cooked and served to students

*Silid na pinaglulutuan ng pagkain na inihahain sa mag-aaral.*

**Offices:** number of rooms dedicated for the use of school officials, teachers, and staff

*Silid na ginagamit na opisina ng mga namamahala, guro at mga kawani ng paaralan.*

**Other uses:** number of rooms used for uses not specified above

*Silid na di nabanggit sa itaas.*





# C

## Web Links Relevant to CMS

ANSA-EAP: <http://www.ansa-eap.net/>

CMS: [checkmyschool.org](http://checkmyschool.org)

CMS Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/checkmyschool>

Department of Education: <http://www.deped.gov.ph/>

Article citing CMS in The Guardian: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/nov/29/technology-can-democractise-development>

WBI Story and Resources on CMS: <http://wbi.worldbank.org/wbi/stories/check-my-school-not-just-website>

Monitoring of Education Budget in India (Planning, Allocations and Expenditures, Institutions: Studies in Accountability, or PAISA): <http://www.accountabilityindia.in/paisa-planning-allocations-and-expenditures-institutions-studies-accountability>

# D

## Sources

The following individuals were interviewed in May and June 2012 in preparation for the case study:

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Dr. Antonio Ingles Jr., Manila  
Ms. Emma de Mesa, Manila

### ***Others***

Mr. Rick Bahague, National Coordinator, Computer Professionals' Union  
Ms. Susan Carandang, National Economic and Development Authority

***Documents authored and provided by ANSA-EAP  
(on file with the author and available upon request)***

*Manual for Infomediaries* (2011)  
 Documentation of CMS Road Shows (2011)  
 Profile of Infomediaries (2011)  
 Design of Workshop for Infomediaries (2011)  
 Documentation of the Infomediary Training Workshop (2011)  
 Planning Guide for Synchronized CMS Validations (2011)  
 Documentation of CSM Assessment with Infomediaries in October 2011 (2011)  
 Operation Thank You Infosheet (2011)  
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***Additional sources***

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“[checkmyschool.org](http://checkmyschool.org)” is an innovative social accountability platform launched by Affiliated Network for Social Accountability - East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP) using open data to promote citizen participation in the monitoring of public school performance.

**The Affiliated Network for Social Accountability - East Asia Pacific (ANSA-EAP)** is a regional network of social accountability practitioners. ANSA-EAP’s vision is to help improve governance by mainstreaming the social accountability approach and advance active citizenship. ANSA-EAP bridges and facilitates multi-stakeholder relations among citizen groups, CSOs, civic associations, the business sector, and the government institutions to promote the constructive engagement of citizens in government performance, specifically, the quality of public service delivery and the transparency of public transactions. Begun with startup support from the World Bank’s Development Grant Facility (2008-2011), ANSA-EAP started as a program housed within the Ateneo School of Government, a unit of the Ateneo de Manila University. Today, it is a legally registered non-profit foundation of the Philippines.

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