

CASE STUDY Written by: Joy Aceron	
Project/Activity Title	Constructing Philippine Education, One School-Building at a Time: The <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> Story
Country	Philippines
Project/Activity Dates	Bayanihang Eskwela 1 (pilot run): late 2005-February 2007 Bayanihang Eskwela 2: April 2009-March 2010 Bayanihang Eskwela 3: April 2010-May 2011 Nationwide Bayanihang Eskwela: March 2011-present
Abstract	<p>The Government Watch (G-Watch) of Ateneo School of Government has implemented <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> since 2005. The program is a community-based monitoring of the government's school-building projects that aims to ensure that the right quality of school building projects are implemented at the right time where it is needed most. The program has mobilized over 700 community-based monitors in its three rounds, who ensured that 133 classrooms amounting to Php 122.8M were constructed according to standards. The program has been officially adopted by the Department of Education (DepEd) as the community-based monitoring component of its school-building program that ensures transparency and accountability in program execution. This social accountability experience generated rich lessons in preventing anomalies and corruption in service delivery, thereby improving effectiveness of services, through citizen engagement in governance.</p>
Brief description of context/issues	<p><i>Bayanihan</i> is a Filipino word for acts of heroism. In the Filipino context, bayanihan classically refers to community members helping and assisting one another with tasks, which would require more hands, such as carrying a house from one place to another.</p> <p><i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> is a community-based monitoring of government's school-building projects (SBPs) that started in 2005 as an initiative of the Government Watch (G-Watch), a social accountability program of the Ateneo School of Government.</p> <p><i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> came as a response to a G-Watch report in 2001 that noted that more than 50% of DWPH-implemented school buildings were not of good quality because plans, standards and specifications were often not followed. There was no means to validate reports on completion submitted to the national office, making the system prone to ghost projects and the contractors' use of sub-standard materials, especially if the projects were constructed in far-flung areas.</p> <p>The importance of ensuring that SBP implementation leads to quality school-buildings is due to a common knowledge that school facilities have an impact on the learning of students. In a newspaper article that came out in 2003, the Department of Education (DepEd) itself stated that children's inferior level of performance in the National Achievement Tests both in the elementary and secondary level may be attributed to overcrowded classrooms.¹ Some studies corroborate this, showing how the physical</p>

¹ Overcrowded classrooms cited. Manila Bulletin. April 6, 2003. p. 12. The results of the National Achievement Test for school year 2004-2005 showed that students who were in classes with 21-60 pupils performed slightly better than those in classes with more than 60 pupils.

	<p>environment of a school or classroom can affect the behavior of people and their attitudes to school and learning.²</p> <p><i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i>, therefore, is contributing to improved learning outcomes of students by ensuring that quality SBPs are constructed through its approach that enhances transparency and accountability in SBP implementation.</p>
<p>Brief description of project/activity</p>	<p><i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i>'s main goal is to ensure that the right quality of SBPs are implemented at the right time following the right processes. It achieves this objective through the conduct of the following key activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laying the Groundwork. This involves formalization of agreements among partners and co-implementers of the project through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), identification of SBPs to monitor and mobilization of monitors. • Briefing-Orientation. Monitors identified (both from the government and civil society) are briefed of their responsibilities and oriented on <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> design and monitoring tool. • Actual Monitoring. Monitoring of SBPs are conducted that include checking of standards in the pre-construction, construction and post-construction stages of SBP implementation. • Post-Monitoring Activities. After the monitoring proper, monitors share their experience, process the result of their monitoring and dialogue with decision-makers to identify solutions to problems identified.
<p>Actors</p>	<p>The three rounds of <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> that covered selected schools were implemented by G-Watch in collaboration with the Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), the Office of the Ombudsman (OMB), the Boy Scouts of the Philippines (BSP) and the Girl Scouts of the Philippines (GSPs). These are the institutions and organizations that became the key drivers of the initiative, along with the monitors at the schools. The first <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> round was supported by USAID-Rule of Law Effectiveness (ROLE), while the second and third rounds were supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).</p> <p>The national government agencies provide the needed authority and guidance, facilitate the flow of needed information, respond to reports immediately and after the monitoring proper and act on monitoring results towards the improvement of the program. The OMB is particularly critical in ensuring that monitoring results are responded to. Its participation is delicately explained to government agencies to prevent the latter from getting threatened. As explained, the OMB only comes in when there are anomalies and if the government agencies become unresponsive. In other words, the role OMB plays in <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> is still within the framework of prevention.</p> <p>The national CSO organizations provide the needed leadership in mobilizing monitors on the field. These organizations are responsible in monitoring national processes of the service delivery like procurements that take place in Manila and ensure that information needed in monitoring reach the monitors and that monitoring results are processed, analyzed and responded to by concerned agencies.</p> <p>The meso-level counterparts of the government agencies and CSOs serve as transmission belts of information and facilitate meso-level processing of monitoring</p>

² Ainley, J. G. "Equipment and Materials" in the International Encyclopedia of Teaching and Teacher Education. Dunkin, M. (ed). Great Britain: Pergamon Press. 1987.

	<p>results. Finally, the local/ grassroots level representatives of these sectors and institutions serve as monitors, most critical in conducting the monitoring and in gathering data and information.</p> <p>The donor partners provided the needed financial support in the operations of G-Watch as coordinator of the effort.</p> <p>The other key actor in ensuring that <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> is implemented is the point unit in the agencies who G-Watch directly coordinates with. For DepEd, the point unit is the Physical Facilities School-Building Engineering Division (PFSED) and for DPWH, it is the Task Force School Building. The point unit also ensures that the project continued even if there were changes in the leadership or secretaries of the agencies, which has been the case for both agencies.</p>
<p>Successful practices</p>	<p><i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> follows the G-Watch social accountability approach³, which includes innovative features that respond to limits and gaps of the past civil society engagement in governance.</p> <p><i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> is designed such that from the preparation to the actual monitoring to the processing of results, representatives from the government and the civil society constructively engage on tasks and responsibilities critical to the success of the project. It includes a coordination-communication mechanism between and among civil society and government actors and participants that facilitates exchange of information, problem-solving and quick response. This makes <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> a joint government-civil society monitoring initiative, which spells its difference from other monitoring efforts.</p> <div data-bbox="446 1024 1068 1491" data-label="Diagram"> </div> <p><i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> follows G-Watch's approach to curbing corruption, which is preventive and pre-emptive. By clarifying standards in the implementation of SBPs and monitoring the compliance to these standards, deviation and corruption are prevented. The monitoring of compliance to standards becomes a stimulus that encourages responsible actors to behave as prescribed.</p> <p>Key to the design of <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> is the participation of the community and the conduct of the monitoring at the community itself. This ensures stakeholders' ownership of the initiative and cuts the cost of monitoring since the monitors no longer incur transportation cost. Community-based Monitoring Teams (CBMTs) are created in each school, composed of the principal, the project engineer, the scouts and the PTA/ NGO representatives.</p> <p>At the heart of <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> is its easy-to-use and simple monitoring tool. The tool is a checklist with yes-or-no questions basically asking whether standards are followed in the SBP implementation. On the first and second round of <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i>, the tool was mainly looking into school-building construction specifications and the mandatory activities before and after the construction that ensure the participation of key stakeholders and the transparency of the process. On the third</p>

	<p>round, the <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> monitoring tool was revised to also look at whether the school-building is constructed where there is acute classroom shortage (responsiveness to need) and whether the classrooms are conducive to learning, looking at factors such as ventilation, lighting, space, sanitation and safety of location as well.</p> <p>Finally, the monitoring results of <i>Bayaniahang Eskwela</i> is backed up by evidence, which include official documents, recordings and photos. Monitors are taught of the importance of gathering evidence to support the result of their monitoring and ensure the objectivity of the monitoring conducted.</p> <p>The approach is proven to be replicable. The same approach is applied in the monitoring of textbooks (Textbook Count) and human rights compliance, particularly the monitoring of the right to suffrage of persons deprived of liberties (PDLs) and the right to food of internally-displaced people (IDPs). Currently, G-Watch is testing the application of the approach in monitoring the service delivery of local government units (LGUs), particularly service deliveries on health, education, agriculture, infrastructure and environment.</p>
Project challenges and solutions	<p>See lessons learned</p>
Results and Accomplishments	<p>Since 2005, for three rounds of implementation in selected schools, <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> has ensured the implementation of 133 classrooms amounting to Php 122.8M worth of contract according to standards, and facilitated quick response that corrected minor errors/ flaws in construction such as defective doorknobs, electrical problems, lack of water sanitation and poor quality materials through the 706 monitors it mobilized and trained in using the <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> monitoring tool.</p> <p>By and large, the monitoring result of <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> points to general compliance of SBP implementation to the standards. Some of the common problematic monitoring findings include: (1) delays in the completion of the SBPs due to failures in bidding, typhoons and realignments; (2) pre-construction mandated activities such as consultation with the community and provision of Program of Works (POW) to monitors not always followed; (3) identification and acquisition of sites for school-buildings as a perennial challenge; and (4) common parts of the school-buildings constructed that can be improved include the wall plastering, ceiling works and the electrical fixtures.⁴</p> <p><i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> is now an adopted program of the Department of Education (DepEd). On 4 March 2011, DepEd issued DepEd Order 21, S. 2011 entitled <i>Guidelines on the Institutionalization of "Bayanihang Eskwela" as a Community-Based Public-Private Monitoring of Projects Under the CY 2011 Regular School Building Program (RSBP) and in Areas Experiencing Acute Classroom Shortage (Red and Black Schools)</i> that officially adopted <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> as the community-based monitoring component of the Department's Regular School Building Program.</p> <p>The system provides for a nationwide mobilization and capacity-building of communities to check on school-building projects in their school using an easy-to-use monitoring tool. It also provides for a system to disseminate information and consolidate monitoring results from all over the country that will allow verification if all the SBPs were constructed according to specifications and standards provided in the Order. This will allow sustained monitoring of SBPs beyond coordination and facilitation of G-Watch.</p>

	<p>To date, since <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> has been implemented, there have been similar other initiatives of civil society in DepEd and other agencies which employed constructive engagement in monitoring. This is an indirect recognition of the effectiveness of the approach of G-Watch in enhancing transparency and accountability in governance. It also indicates that government is becoming more open to participation of civil society and citizens in critical affairs of governance such as monitoring.</p> <p>In other words, <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> serves a demonstration case that proves that the following conditions conducive for participatory governance are true:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities can be mobilized and capacitated to do monitoring of basic services such as school-building construction. • Civil society can work hand and hand with government in monitoring service delivery performance. • Monitoring can result in implementation that follows standards, plans and specification, hence ensuring the right quantity and quality of services are provided. • Communication and coordination between and among government and civil society stakeholders from the ground up to the national level can facilitate quick response that enforce compliance to standards and prevent deviations and anomalies. • Reporting and processing of monitoring results involving all stakeholders can provide findings and recommendations that can be used in policy-making to further improve service delivery. <p>The previous runs of <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> ensured that good quality classrooms were constructed on time where it is needed most. Its adoption as a regular program of DepEd means that its implementation will be nationwide and sustainable. Its expanded and sustained implementation will hopefully contribute in improved education outcomes, thereby proving that transparency and accountability is linked with development outcomes as well.</p>
<p>Impact on the MDGs</p>	<p>In a newspaper article, the DepEd stated that the children’s inferior level of performance in the National Achievement Tests (NATs) both in the elementary and secondary level may be attributed to overcrowded classrooms.⁵ The NAT results for school year 2004-2005 showed that students who were in classes with 21-60 pupils performed slightly better than those in classes with more than 60 pupils.⁶ Further, it stated that overcrowded classroom is never conducive to teaching by mentors and learning by students.⁷ There have been cases, as per DepEd, showing that, because of the bloated number of students in the classrooms, the teachers are not able to focus on all students.</p> <p>This report has been corroborated by studies. While there has been little consistent proof that the availability of materials and equipments in school has a strong effect on achievement, there is a substantial amount of evidence to show that physical environment of a school or classroom can affect the behavior of people and their attitudes to school and learning.⁸ As Glass (1987) put it, large reductions in school class size promise learning benefits of a magnitude commonly believed not to be within the power of educators to achieve.⁹</p> <p>The apparent relationship between the condition and availability of classrooms and NAT scores is indicative of the potential impact of mechanisms such as <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i>, which ensures the construction of quality school-buildings, on education</p>

	<p>outcomes. This could prove that transparency and accountability mechanism through citizen-government engagement has a part in achieving outcome indicators such as the Millennium Development Goals. In this case, just like how improved learning environment leads to improved results of achievement tests, it is also possible that a conducive learning environment has a part to play in achieving the 2nd MDG (ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling), or at least in improving completion rates, as this facilitates learning of the students.</p>
<p>Sustainability</p>	<p>Based on lessons from past monitoring initiatives such as Textbook Count, G-Watch has identified the following elements that ensure sustainability of G-Watch social accountability monitoring initiatives, namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) a policy from the national that supports decentralized and community-based engagement of citizens and government in performance monitoring; (2) operational mechanisms at the national and local levels of the government as stipulated in the national policy; and (3) tools and technology for building of capacities of citizens, communities and government officials on the ground. <p>To sustain <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i>, G-Watch ensures that all these elements are present. DepEd Order 21, Series 2011 responds to the first two elements. Through the memo, <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> is officially adopted by DepEd as the community-based monitoring of its school-building projects. The memo also clearly stipulates the roles and responsibilities of actors who would be responsible in implementing <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i>, covering critical tasks such as the dissemination of information, formation of community-based monitoring teams and mobilization of monitors, capacity-building of monitors and consolidation and processing of monitoring results. Finally, in response to the third sustainability requirement, G-Watch came up with a simple and easy-to-use guidebook, the <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> Manual, that guides the implementation of <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i>, including a step-by-step guide in the use of the <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> tool.</p>
<p>Challenges and Lessons Learned¹⁰</p>	<p><i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> confronted four key challenges, addressing which generated rich lessons useful for replication. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting the government to engage and respond; • Mobilizing and capacitating communities; • Bringing together key stakeholders; and • Monitoring responsiveness to need. <p>When G-Watch first presented the result of its first SBP monitoring, DPWH was particularly hesitant to engage G-Watch. It took G-Watch three years to get both DepEd and DPWH to agree to undertake <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i>. Three key factors were found to be most useful in addressing this challenges: (1) identification of champions in the agency; (2) use of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA); and (3) persistence on the part of G-Watch.</p> <p>The other critical pre-requisite of doing <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> was the mobilization and capacity-building of communities. It was a challenge to enable the many ordinary citizens who want to volunteer to participate effectively as monitors and how to sustain their interest until the monitoring has been completed. Several lessons can be generated from <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> experience in addressing this challenge, namely:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An easy-to-use tool is most critical to enable ordinary citizens to monitor. • A joint monitoring and close coordination between government officials and civil society monitors addresses the need for capacity/ expertise in checking on the highly technical part of school building construction. • Grassroots leadership is key in mobilizing and sustaining the interest of volunteer until the completion of the monitoring and it could come in many forms. • Putting fun to the activities makes the rather heavy and demanding work light and seamless to volunteers, officials, organizers and coordinators alike. <p>The other important element of <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> is its multi-stakeholdership. Bringing different stakeholders together is not without challenge because of the biases and baggage of stakeholders against each other. It takes re-orientation and time to allow constructive engagement among the stakeholders to prosper. One critical issue is trust; hence trust-building is a continuing process that needs ample attention by the leaders of the process.</p> <p>With the coming together of stakeholders in a constructive and fun engagement, there is a question of whether objectivity has already been compromised. <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> ensures objectivity of monitoring results and assures that the exercise of power is objectively accounted for by emphasizing on data and evidence, maximizing its preventive approach and underscoring the importance of independence of institutions/ sectors involved to make constructive engagement meaningful and effective.</p> <p>Finally, there is a challenge in going beyond monitoring of SBPs that only look at whether it is compliant to plans to also include checking whether the SBPs are allocated where it is needed most. Because of the worsening problem of acute classroom shortage and the experience of G-Watch where SBPs were constructed in schools not needing them most, <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> adjusted its design and monitoring tool to respond to this.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex 1: The Government Watch Idea Annex 2: Highlights of the Monitoring Findings of Bayanihang Eskwela 1-3 Annex 3: Lessons Learned from <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> Experience Annex 4: A Brief Situationer of Philippine Education Annex 5: Mapping of Anti-Corruption Initiatives in Education Annex 6: <i>Bayanihang Eskwela</i> Manual and Tool Annex 7: DepEd Order 21, S. 2011: <i>Guidelines on the Institutionalization of “Bayanihang Eskwela” as a Community-Based Public-Private Monitoring of Projects Under the CY 2011 Regular School Building Program (RSBP) and in Areas Experiencing Acute Classroom Shortage (Red and Black Schools)</i></p>