

Namibia Basic Education Support: BES II/BES 3 Transition Conference Final Report Narrative Summary

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FINAL REPORT NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

For three short days, almost one hundred colleagues in education met to deliberate on their past five years of work together and consider how to proceed for their next five years of collaborative effort to continue moving toward a better quality of primary education for the learners in the six northern education regions of Namibia. As with most endeavors in the Namibian education sector, the task of squeezing ten years into three days was ambitious in the extreme. Nonetheless, despite the somewhat unrealistic nature of the meeting objectives, a great deal was accomplished in the very short time frame. We looked back to the successes and challenges of the Basic Education Support Project, Phase II and looked ahead toward the potential for success and identified the challenges to achievement in the BES 3 project.

The participants included the USAID Mission Director, Mr. Gary Newton, and senior USAID education staff, several Regional Education Directors, the Director of Education Planning and Implementation, Mr. Charles Kabajani, representatives from NIED and other implementation partners such as Peace Corps, IFESH, iNET, NETA, Discovery Channel, Urban Trust and, of course, the very hard working Circuit Support Team members from Oshana, Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshikoto, Kavango and Caprivi. The AED Washington team was represented by Dr. John Middleton, Vice President of the Global Education Center. The major activities of the conference were reviewing the accomplishments and challenges of BES II from the overall as well as the regional perspective, introduction to the components and objectives of the BES 3 project, and developing potential implementation strategies for the upcoming year.



The conference was officially opened by Mr. Charles Kabajani on behalf of the Honourable Minister John Mutorwa. Mr. Kabajani, as Chairman of the BES 3 Steering Committee, encouraged the participants to use the examples of past achievements to work together on the main focus of the new project, that of improving quality of education in Namibia's primary schools. He reminded us to keep the child at the center of all we do

in the areas of HIV and AIDS mitigation, decentralization, information and communication technology, and improving instruction in mathematics, language and science in the primary schools. In officially opening the conference, the Director encouraged us to reflect on past success and use lessons learned as we chart the way forward.

BES II Successes

Mr. David Benedetti, the Chief of Party for BES II since its inception in 2000, offered a brief but very



informative summary of the project accomplishments from the perspective of the MBESC and USAID requirements and expectations. Some highlights from his presentation based on the project's intermediate results included the following:

- **65% of the teachers** participating in project interventions showed improved performance in the use of learner centered teaching strategies
- **53% of the teachers** demonstrated more effective use of continuous assessment techniques
- **83% of the participating schools** are implementing activities from their collaboratively developed School Development Plans
- **100% of the Circuit Support Teams** in the target regions demonstrate improved capacity to support teachers, principals and parents in school improvement
- **82% of the participating schools** regularly hold site based teacher workgroup sessions to improve instructional practice. This year, **3,910 teachers and 3,695 parents** participated in these activities.



Donna Kay LeCzel, BES II's Teacher Development Advisor, offered a different perspective on the successes of the project by focusing on the people involved in its implementation. Throughout the five years of USAID support, it has been the parents, learners, teachers, Advisory Teachers, Inspectors of Education, Resource Teachers, Regional Education Officers, Directors, and MBESC senior officers who have contributed to the achievement of project targets. The photo page attests to the many skills that have been acquired, the contribution of parents and community members, and the dedication of Namibian educators to ensure high quality schooling for primary learners in the target regions.

The conference plan included the opportunity for regional groups to report on the project's successes from their perspective. It is important to note that the BES II objectives, targets and activities are firmly embedded in the MBESC Strategic Plan for 2001 – 2006. CST members reported the following achievements, as a result of BES II:

- Parents are now constructively and substantively involved in school activities; this is in line with the MBESC directive to involve parents in education;
- All SIP schools have School Development Plans (SDPs), many guided by School Development Committees; the Ministry now requires all schools to have SDPs;
- Use of Continuous Assessment (CA) in the classroom is notably increasing; use of CA is a policy of MBESC;
- Use of Learner Centered Education (LCE) in the classroom is notably increasing; use of LCE is a policy of MBESC;
- HIV and AIDS is more frequently addressed in Cluster, Circuit, and Regional professional development meetings; this is a directive from MBESC; and
- Decentralization of management is being strengthened by providing more supportive training to School Boards, thereby empowering parents and community leaders; School Boards are now required by the Ministry.

Therefore, it is reasonable to say that the extent to which CST reported on project achievements, they are actually reporting on the attainment of elements of the MBESC Strategic Plan for 2001 – 2006.

At the end of the first day, the participants took a few minutes to reflect on what they considered to be the BES II project's one important achievement, one major challenge, and to offer one possible response to a perceived challenge. Many responses to the first question centered on the importance and success of bringing parents and community members into the process of improving their schools. One quote will serve to demonstrate the trend: ***“The most important BES II achievement is the involvement of parents in education.”*** Many participants also pointed to the fact that Namibian educators at all levels have acquired and are now using a broad range of new skills to enhance their work: ***“Independence: Training of Namibians to do the work on their own, building capacity from within.”***

In terms of challenges, the participants focused on the need to sustain the processes and systems put into place during project implementation: ***“Continuity and sustainability of the good interventions and impact on teaching and learning.”*** Others concentrated on the need to spread the success to all schools in the target regions: ***“We must expand SIP to all our schools.”*** With regard to suggesting ways to meet the challenges, the participants offered very practical solutions such as: ***“The regions need to take charge and not wait to receive more but rather use what they have.”*** ***“We must integrate the program activities into our system.”***

From BES II to BES 3

The second day of the conference focused on becoming familiar with the new project's objectives. The BES 3 Team was introduced and offered information on the major components of the project as defined by MBESC and USAID. D. K. LeCzel, the Chief of Party, provided an overview of the major project elements:

USAID Namibia's Program Objective 6:

Increased capacity of the basic education system to give learners the foundations for health and livelihood

Target population: Grade 1 through 7 learners in the six education regions of Omusati, Oshana, Ohangwena, Oshikoto, Kavango and Caprivi

Results: By 2010,

- ✓ 20% increase in knowledge of language, math, science and life skills among male and female learners completing grades 4 and 7 in the circuits participating in program interventions
- ✓ 50% of the orphans and other vulnerable children who receive support organized through school and community based structures will remain in school, with assistance provided equitably to girls and boys
- ✓ structural system changes will have been presented to USAID and MBESC for concurrence and nationwide implementation:
 - improved teaching methods in core subjects
 - integrated use of ICT for administration, management, and training purposes
 - strategies for responding to teacher absenteeism
 - assessment of learner achievement at grade 4
 - measurement of classroom quality and school effectiveness

Three intermediate results:

IR 1: Increased resilience of the basic education system to cope with the HIV and AIDS epidemic

IR 2: Improved effectiveness of decentralized management

IR 3: Improved quality of language, math, and science education delivered by primary schools

IR1: HIV and AIDS: Ms. Tautiko Shikongo, the BES 3 Professional Development Coordinator for Oshana, Omusati, Ohangwena, and Oshikoto Regions, provided a thorough overview of the basic elements of the first intermediate result. She pointed out that there are four major areas of intervention to support the Ministry's efforts to deal with the impact of HIV and AIDS on the quality of primary education. The three key areas are:

- assisting the Regions, MBESC, MHETEC, and MWACW to develop ways to ensure that all orphans and vulnerable children remain in school through grade 7 and acquire the skills and knowledge needed for life-long learning
- supporting the two education Ministries and the Regions in developing a range of strategies to ameliorate the impact of teacher absenteeism on education quality
- support the needed improvements to the Ministry's data collection and analysis system to enable all stakeholders to have access to and be able to use information related to supporting OVCs and meeting the demands of increased teacher absenteeism in the schools.
- working with NIED on the development of curriculum materials and teaching strategies to incorporate skills and knowledge about HIV and AIDS into primary school instruction with a focus on the gender specific needs of girls and boys

Tautiko explained that, once USAID funding is secured for this component of the project, the BES 3 team will include both a long term technical advisor with expertise in HIV and AIDS as well as periodic short term technical support.

IR 2: Decentralization: Mr. David Benedetti, of recent BES II COP fame, joins the project in his role as consultant on management of decentralization. He enumerated the expected outcomes for the project in this component:

- Improved, well-informed policy decisions and planning capacity for MBESC.
- An expanded EMIS system that informs decision making and improves decentralized information management.
- Increased capacity and accountability of the decentralized education system.
- Increased participation of school boards in the planning process at local levels.

The intended results of the activities in this component include:

- EMIS system is strengthened to capture HIV and AIDS and OVC data
- EMIS system provides timely and accurate information that is available at regional levels
- School boards develop effective procedures for planning
- Decentralization process is managed using tools of benchmarks and index of effectiveness
- Capacity of regional and district officers improved, as measured by achievement of benchmarks

The project team will work closely with a wide range of partners both within the Ministry and among local NGOs to design and implement the appropriate interventions to support the Government's goals in developing an effective and efficient decentralized education system.

IR 3: Improved quality of language, math, and science education: Our Professional Development Coordinator for Kavango and Caprivi, Mr. Vincent Matakala, provided a thorough overview of the instructional improvement component of BES 3. The major objectives to be achieved by 2010 include:

- A significant number of primary teachers will effectively use learner-centered approaches in math, science, language, and life skills and will better support student learning through the use of continuous assessment.
- Teacher educators in the colleges of education that prepare teachers through the three-year BETD diploma program will use a high proportion of teaching time demonstrating and modeling learner-centered approaches in math, science, language, and life skills instruction. Continuous assessment will be used as a method of supporting student progress at the colleges of education.
- A high proportion of student teachers will be able to use learner-centered approaches and continuous assessment effectively in their practice teaching.
- An index of classroom effectiveness will be developed, piloted, and analyzed to inform the process of systematically measuring improvements in language, math and science instruction at the primary level.
- An assessment tool, that complements the existing continuous assessment system, will be developed for assessing learners at grade 4 in the priority subjects of math, science, language and life skills.

The project activities will include a program of professional development for teacher educators in collaboration with NIED and IFESH, and continuing support for teacher professional development in the regions. The existing SIP site based (cluster and school) program of ongoing teacher workshops will be strengthened, with a focus on the three core subject areas of math, science and language. Circuit Support Team members will participate in workshops and activities to improve their ability to work with teachers in those subject areas.

EMIS and Information Management: Mr. Muhammed Liman, the project's Implementation Coordinator/Science Advisor, and his colleague from PAD, Dr. Demus Makuwa, provided a very useful overview of the expected activities and outcomes related to information management across all three major components.

Dr. Makuwa began by reminding us of the three types of managers and assured us that with proper use of EMIS we can all be managers who make things happen and know what happened. He provided a useful background of the past collaboration with BES projects on data collection, analysis, and reporting of progress in the education sector. Mr. Liman went on to outline the plans for monitoring and evaluation of all BES 3 project activities and the need for a number of baseline studies to provide the basis for measuring progress in the schools, clusters, circuits and regions. We will build on the M&E activities developed in BES II such as the school self assessment system to inform the decentralization of EMIS and ICT processes. Monitoring and evaluation systems across all three intermediate results were clearly delineated in the presentation.

In addition to the AED team and Ministry partners, BES 3 will collaborate with several related partner organizations. The importance of integrating information and

communication technology (ICT) into the work of improving classroom instruction became very clear through the presentations by our iNET, NETA, and Discovery Channel partners. The potential for the use of media such as television, video, and computer technology to meet the many challenges ahead as we implement BES 3 offers excitement and innovation.

Challenges, Expectations and Plans

The panel discussion, led by Mrs. Dutte Shinyemba, Mr. Walter Nel, and Ms. Mariana van Graan, offered the conference participants with an opportunity to delve into the many potential challenges and difficulties in reaching the BES 3 targets. We were reminded that the project goals are directly in line with the goals and targets of the Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture. The topics of the discussion included the allocation and availability of human resources both within the project staff and in the regions, especially with regard to the SIP Resource Teachers. The need for building on lessons learned in terms of issues such as school board training, support for OVCs, community development to manage and monitor small grant projects, and providing alternative instructional strategies such as multi-grade teaching while maintaining quality were some of the important issues raised and discussed. At the same time, we were reminded that responding to challenges takes time and close collaboration. Finally, one panel member charged the group with remembering that the ultimate responsibility for improvement and change lies within the Namibian education sector.

The in terms of expectations, the participants offered a long list that included: *“To continue to build capacity from within” “Improve learner performance in classrooms” “BES 3 will make a difference to the lives and future of Namibian learners” “Give parents and guardians of OVCs the skills to carefully look after them at home and at school”*

With the overview of the new project as a basis, the participants were given the opportunity to meet in regional teams and in groups based on roles and responsibilities across the regions to deliberate on the way forward. Plans included specific tasks for developing baseline information on teacher absenteeism and OVCs in their circuits as well as some general recommendations that can be used to inform the project’s annual workplan development process.

The View from USAID

On behalf of Mr. Gary Newton, Ms. Tina Dooley-Jones offered USAID’s view of past accomplishments and future goals. We were reminded of the long and very positive relationship between the Government of Namibia and USAID through support to all sectors and especially education since 1991. Ms. Dooley-Jones announced with pleasure that the agreement between USAID and AED has been signed that provides five years of further support to education in Namibia. As we are all well aware, the HIV and AIDS pandemic is certainly the greatest challenge we face in our efforts to maintain and improve a quality education system that ensures full potential of all participants including parents, teachers, education officials and most importantly



learners. We were challenged to insure that the activities and programs implemented during BES 3 serve the education and social needs of the growing number of orphans and vulnerable children, offer teachers every opportunity to succeed in their important work, involve parents and other community stakeholders in the process, and develop sustainable, cost effective systems for maintaining the progress. We were reminded that the progress to date is encouraging and impressive, and with the continued support and partnership of USAID we can move forward with optimism in the face of serious challenges.

Closure and Celebration

On behalf of the Permanent Secretary, the Undersecretary for Formal Education, Dr. Patti Swarts officially closed the BES Transition Conference. In the remarks, thanks to USAID and the AED BES II staff were generously given. The PS encouraged us to sustain progress to date and to develop systems that will meet the serious challenges of improving learner achievement and the impact of HIV and AIDS on quality education delivery in our schools. We must seek partnerships with all stakeholders in order to maximize the resources available to MBESC and other government institutions. The conference was officially closed with good wishes for safe journeys and success in the work ahead.



At the end of the final day, the participants enjoyed a well deserved celebratory dinner during which all Circuit Support Teams and Regional officers were presented with a very special certificate of appreciation by Dr. John Middleton of the Academy for Educational Development. The conference provided us all with much to think about, enthusiasm about the work ahead, and satisfaction of a job well done. Congratulations!

Respectfully submitted,

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Chief of Party
AED/BES 3