

Executive Summary

When the bus comes to school it's like the best day at school for them. (Teacher, Metinaro)

This report is of the progress of the Mobile Learning Centre Project (MLCP) an education project managed by Mary MacKillop Today (MMT) in Timor-Leste.

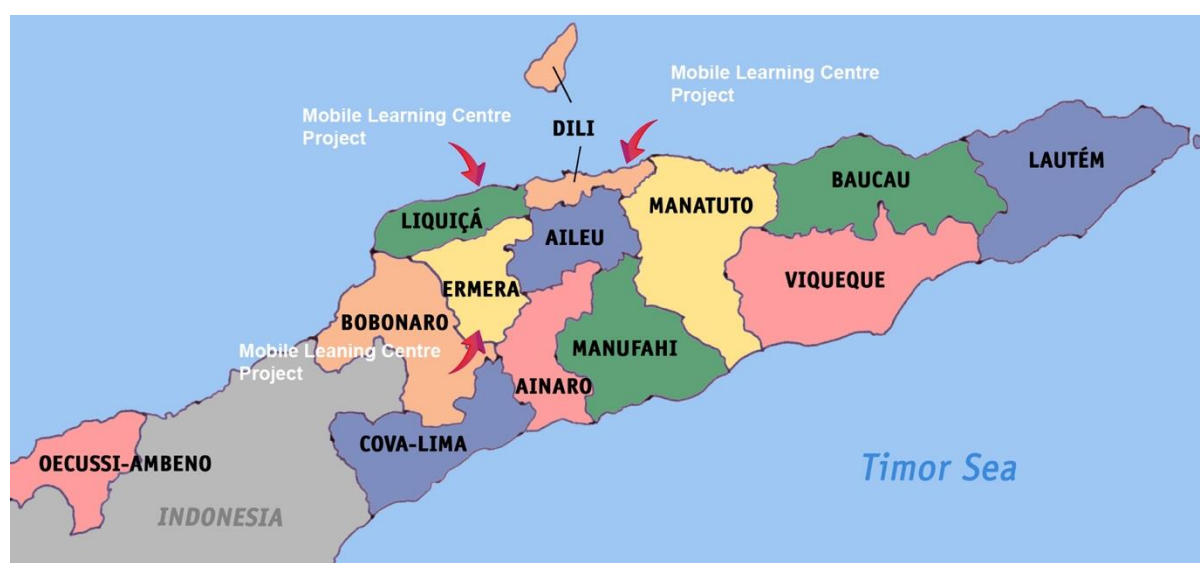
Ethos of Engagement Consultants (EoE) was commissioned to undertake the evaluation between November 2021 to March 2022. The evaluation team was headed by Dr Anne Stephens and Co-Lead Ms Cristina Freitas Benedek in Australia, and Ms Rita Pires, Mr Octávio Piedade and Ms Herminia Martins, field researchers in Timor-Leste.

Focus group and key informant interviews were conducted between 31 January and 18 February 2022 with a sample of 37 educators, parents students and school administrators, represented in the Dili, Liquica and Ermera Municipalities.

Project Background

The transformative impact of education in promoting sustainable and community-led development is acknowledged in Timor-Leste's Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030, which aims to ensure all citizens have access to a "quality education that will allow them to participate in the economic, social and political development of [the] nation." Education and training are the keys to improving life opportunities for Timorese and enabling them to reach their full potential.

The (MLCP) is one of three education projects managed by MMT focussed on providing quality education to children in the early years of learning, pre-school and years 1-4. The suite of projects provides teacher training, quality teaching resources and school infrastructure supports across the key learning areas health promotion, Tetun literacy and numeracy. The projects are implemented in Municipalities across Timor-Leste.



Mobile Learning Centre (MLCP) Project

MMT's MLCP visit schools to deliver fun, engaging and play-based literacy and numeracy educational activities for students in grade 1 to 4. The project has been implemented since 2015 in the Dili, Liquica and Ermera Municipalities. Adaptations were made based on a 2021 external evaluation to strengthen the sustainability of the program and overall objective to provide quality resources in Tetun to classroom teachers. Adaptation were made to the teacher's training component, monitoring/mentoring by Field Based Officers (FBOs), and work with parents. This evaluation will contribute to the development of the next 3-year phase of the project.

Key Recommendations

The evaluators recommend the MLCP be continued towards national-level replication. The evaluators recommend the project be continued and replicated across Timor-Leste. Seven recommendations are made to support the next three-year phase of the MLCP.

1. Equity and Inclusion

MMT consult with key disability advocacy groups and education experts to develop training resources, FBO upskilling and teacher guidance documents to support students with disability access to the curriculum, that is consistent with the learner-centred approach being taught and modeled to teachers.

The evaluation did not make reference, encounter or seek out the voices of parents, teachers and students who may identify as LGBTIQ. However, LGBTIQ people's aspirations and needs could be scoped for incorporation into the project in the future.

2. Teacher Monitoring and Mentoring by FBO

Teachers and administrators request the post-test results. These could be shared with teachers to demonstrate the range of change made over the year by both themselves and as a cohort of trainees.

Teacher post-test results may be included in the formal certification being developed by MMT with INFORDEPE, as proof of achievement, as well as course completion.

3. Small grants

Consider extending the building grant scheme to support the upgrade, training or building of libraries, storage facilities etc., for the secure handling of books and resources.

We recommend MMT explore opportunities to formalise maintenance and ongoing costs associated with library facilities with government in their formal agreements (i.e. MOU).

4. Teachers' Communities of practice

Within Municipalities, MMT could establish Teachers' Communities of Practice (CoP), that once established, are self-autonomous and driven by teachers themselves. This is to help resolve the issue that sharing of resources to teachers who did not attend the training is less likely to be effective without providing ongoing pedagogical advice, mentoring and support. One-off sessions will not effect change but may stimulate interest to learn more.

The COPs provide informal supplementary training and refresher training in a peer-to-peer format. MMT might supply COPs with guidance on its purpose. The COPs will reinforce the

learning from the training beyond schools' year-long association with MMT through the FBOs and continue parent literacy awareness events.

5. Teacher training

Teachers suggest that MMT redesign the training timeline to be offered during the school holidays or maybe 1 or 2 weeks before the school start. This is to enable teachers to fully concentrate on the training over the course of a week, instead of during the school time. The recommendation is the MMT scope the timing of training with Municipal MEYS and INFORDEPE, prior to the implementation of the program in a new Municipality.

6. MMT Monitoring and Reporting

The evaluators recommend a tightening of reporting processes and attention to report detail including ensuring project reports update, rather than reproduce, the report from the previous period.

The monitoring indicators might also include key school data metrics including school attendance, child nutrition data, literacy and numeracy outcomes, and child behaviour data recorded by schools, as another set of measures of student change over time. These would not substitute for the current sets of indicators and measures collected, but may present a pattern indicating the influence of the project is having during the year-long implementation.

The recommendation is for MMT to scope with MEYS, INFORDEPE and MoH partners permission to receive data sets on particular student cohorts.

7. Parents/Carers training in early years

The evaluators recommend that MMT include early childhood development and techniques to prevent bullying, child abuse and neglect in their programmed events for parents.