LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO POVERTY

melayani
Menguraikan Permasalahan
Perbaikan Layanan Dasar
di Indonesia

Operational Note 3
Iterating Implementation for Impact
Starting Small and Building Up

How do local governments fine tune their service delivery in the face of persistent or emerging challenges? What does a "change of mindset" in addressing service delivery challenges look like? The first operational note in this series showed how an initial desk review of data by the government MELAYANI team in Belu district revealed that teacher certification was not a key driver of student learning, as they had previously thought. This finding prompted the team to visit well- and poorly-performing schools in their own district to see if they could better identify what did seem to matter. A second operational note, "Digging Deeper: Iterating Understanding of a Problem" documents that process and what the team found.

This operational note examines what the Belu MELAYANI team found in the field and how they used that information to develop, test and refine solutions to challenges in teaching and learning. The problem-solving approach is not terribly difficult—it does not require that local governments "start over" in understanding the problems that they face. However, it does require new approaches in gathering information, developing and implementing solutions, maintaining an open mind about whether a chosen solution works (rather than a 'set and forget' approach of just assuming it will), and retaining a problem-solving focus.

This operational notes series aims to share experiences and practical lessons from MELAYANI – Untangling Problems in Improving Basic Services (*Menguraikan Permasalahan Perbaikan Layanan Dasar di Indonesia*).

MELAYANI is a program that builds local government capacity to address service delivery problems at the district level. It does so through helping district governments identify meaningful problems, break them down, analyze their parts, and develop and refine solutions. The methodology for problem solving builds on the problem-driven iterative adaptation (PDIA) methodology developed by a team at Harvard University. It focuses on building team ownership of problems and solutions, empowering local staff to innovate and experiment, using data to understand problems and their causes, and iterating to sustainable solutions. The program emphasizes that staff themselves must do the work to understand the problem and identify and implement solutions. MELAYANI provides tools to support the process, which is guided by a trained coach, who is supported by a mentor with expertise in the PDIA methodology.

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Initial Challenges Pushed the Team to Learn More About Their Own Schools

As described in previous operational notes, the government MELAYANI team in Belu district focused on improving the quality of primary education. An initial break-down of the problem led the team to believe that low numbers of certified teachers was the main cause of poor learning outcomes. Testing that belief against available data (by correlating performance with proportion of certified teachers in each school) led the team to discover not only that there was little correlation between the presence of certified teachers and higher student test scores, but also that some of their other assumptions about what drives better performance (e.g., urban schools do better, rural schools do worse) were wrong as well.[1]

These findings surprised the MELAYANI team and made them more willing to question their assumptions about the causes of problems and about solutions. They decided to visit schools in their own district to see if they could better identify drivers of improved student learning. In total, the team visited ten schools, split evenly between those that were "well-performing" and those that were "poor performing."[2] The team looked at three aspects of performance: (i) teaching and learning, (ii) the role of school committees, and (iii) the administrative burden

of implementing School Operational Funds (*Bantuan Operational Sekolah—BOS*).[3]

This operational note focuses on the most "exploratory" of the three topics, teaching and learning. To understand how teaching and learning varies across schools, the team asked only two questions of teachers and headmasters in the schools they visited:

- What factors support you / your teachers in teaching students well?
- What obstacles do you face in teaching / in supporting teachers to do well?

The responses to these questions not only demonstrated that there were good practices being implemented in some of Belu's primary schools. They also helped the team to better articulate the differences between the schools that were more and less successful at promoting student learning.

Positive Deviance Provided Inspiration as to What Could Work

While it was important that the team identified problems in implementation, they were also proud (and in some cases surprised) to also see examples of implementation working.[4] Open ended visits from the district staff are not the norm in Indonesia, where 'monitoring'

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[1] See "Keeping it Simple: Supporting Government to Use Evidence to Solve Problems," Operational Note 1 in this series.

[2] Based primarily on average school test scores. For the last six schools (after the instruments were tested), the team also began to consider location/access, school management (based on input from active school monitors) and student population (notably the presence of internally displaced people). While different factors were not necessarily evenly split into two groups, the idea was to better understand additional factors in school performance.

[3] See "Digging Deeper: Iterating Understanding of a Problem," Operational Note 2 in this series for more details on this process.

[4] For more on positive deviance, see Pascale, Richard, Jerry Sternin and Monique Sternin. 2010. The Power of Positive Deviance: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World's Toughest Problems, Brighton Mass: Harvard Business Review Press.

is often focused on ensuring compliance and communicating guidance rather than better understanding the situation on the ground. All three members of the MELAYANI team that undertook the school visits were impressed with the approach of listening to headmasters and teachers and allowing them to explain what they thought was going well. Key findings included:

Headmasters play an important role in motivating teachers and encouraging them to continue learning and solving problems. To support teachers in the classroom, it is important that they:

- **Undertake routine supervision**. This means that headmasters come into the classroom, watch the teacher delivering a lesson and interacting with students. It also means that they give feedback on areas for improvement and provide support to develop a plan for improvement. In poorly performing schools, headmasters did not undertake supervision, or did it from outside of the class (looking at paperwork alone). In those situations, headmasters indicated that they did not want to create tension by criticizing teachers, or were simply uncomfortable providing feedback.[5]

- **Hold routine meetings focused on classroom issues.** Teachers benefitted from opportunities to discuss challenges that they have in the class with other teachers and the headmaster. In poorly performing locations, meetings did not happen at all or focused exclusively on administrative issues. This left teachers feeling that they had no support if they faced challenges in the classroom.

- **Support internal working groups and learning.** All schools, in theory, have "mini teacher working groups" (*kelompok kerja guru- mini – KKG mini*) which are an opportunity for teachers to learn from each other. Where these were functioning, a senior or recently trained teacher[6] would share their knowledge on a particular topic. Limited funding for this activity is provided by School Operational Funding (*Bantuan Operasional Sekolah--BOS*). In exceptional schools, the headmaster identified a need and hired an outside trainer once a year.

- **Engage the school committee around both budget discussions and relations with parents.** Budget transparency was important for both teachers and parents. The timely arrival of books and materials was critical for teachers, who were further dispirited if they did not receive them and did not know if they had been ordered by the headmaster.

The team noted that teachers could also be active in helping each other, even across schools, but their motivation to do so was often strongly influenced by their school environment. Currently, teachers are particularly confused about the new curriculum, as it takes a different approach to teaching and learning, and has new lesson planning and reporting requirements.

While there were examples of innovation and good practice coming from headmasters and

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[5] Headmasters are often promoted from the ranks of senior teachers. Some of them described discomfort providing feedback to individuals who were their peers for many years.

[6] Due to funding constraints, often only a limited number of teachers from a school are trained on a given topic. The government is currently rolling out a new curriculum, and many teachers mentioned needing additional support to understand it.

teachers, this was less the case with respect to school monitors.[7] In the majority of locations, the school monitors had not visited the school recently (in some cases for years) and where they had, they often just signed the guest book, but did not interact with teachers in any way. Given that the MELAYANI team was composed primarily of school monitors, this last finding led to some reflection about school monitor attendance and performance.

Positive change happens despite, rather than because of, district systems of support for educational management. The "islands of excellence" uncovered by the field visits provided excellent examples of positive interactions between headmasters, teachers and school committees. They are consistent with other findings indicating that engaging all school level actors, or "whole school change" is most effective in supporting innovation and learning. However, these practices were generally being implemented individually, independent from support or motivation from the broader educational system.

The discovery of positive deviants reframed the challenge for the team. With several examples of good practices in hand, the "solution" that the team sought changed from what to do to help teachers in the classroom to how to systematize successes by sharing and refining practices that they could already see working in Belu. Focusing on the positives helped the MELAYANI team feel empowered and motivated, while also looking at the negatives showed them where they needed to focus.

Using Existing Delivery Mechanisms to Support Impactful Change

Existing but dysfunctional working groups of headmasters and teachers provided a potential opportunity to take a more systematic approach to supporting positive interactions within schools. The government MELAYANI team was composed of a small group of school monitors interested in change. They realized that they could use many of their routine activities supporting headmasters and teachers to improve school-level interactions. They looked to three existing forums:

1. the teachers working groups (k*elompok kerja guru – KKG*), held across a group of schools;
2. headmaster working groups (*kelompok kerja kepala sekolah – K3S*) held across the same group of schools; and
3. the mini teacher working groups (KKG mini) which are held within each school.

These forums are meant to be supported by school monitors but are often not implemented for a variety of reasons: funding challenges, school monitors not showing up, teachers/headmasters not joining as they don't find the activity useful, and/or only using the meeting to develop annual test materials.

One member of the Belu MELAYANI team, Ibu Agus, was herself a school monitor. She decided that she could use her schools and working groups as a pilot to better understand how to make them more effective. Drawing on discussions

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[7] School monitors are employed by the district education department to provide technical support and oversight to groups of schools. In theory, they bring expertise both to headmasters and teachers and provide assistance through school visits and facilitating discussions across schools.

with teachers during the school visits undertaken by the MELAYANI team, Ibu Agus started focusing on themes that headmasters and teachers themselves had identified during those visits. She also set aside time after each working group to reflect on the experience with the MELAYANI coach and participants. These explicit discussions helped identify how the working groups themselves could be most impactful for teachers and headmasters.

The pilot revealed three characteristics important for effective working groups:

1. The most critical aspect was **ownership and relevance of the topics covered** by the working group participants. Rather than using the agenda planned by the education department, Ibu Agus focused the working groups on needs identified by teachers and headmasters during the field visits.

2. In line with findings about the importance of headmaster support for teachers, she realized that the **content of the teachers' and headmasters' working groups needed to be linked.** For example, in the school visits, teachers had raised challenges in understanding the lesson planning approach under the new curriculum. Ibu Agus worked to ensure headmasters understood the approach, and then helped them talk together about how to support staff lesson planning.

3. Preparation was key to the effectiveness of groups. The working group meetings needed more planning and management than she had previously realized: topics needed to be sufficiently focused to allow for useful discussion, external speakers needed to be well briefed on topics (and managed if they got off point) and time needed to be scheduled for headmasters to grapple together with how they would apply lessons to their schools and staff.

Capturing Ibu Agus' reflections in a way that can be communicated to other school monitors will be important if they are to also implement a better working group approach.

Expanding the Authorizing Space for Reform

PDIA methodology emphasizes the importance of an authorizing environment for reform— paying attention to generating support from stakeholders inside an organization. Establishing an authorizing environment can be harder than it would first appear, even within a single department.

While Ibu Agus was working hard to support change in her working groups, both she and the rest of the MELAYANI team were aware that their ability to effect greater change was limited by their positions as school monitors. School monitors are staff of the education department, but they report to the head of the department and do not sit within any of the education sections. Monitors generally do not develop their own materials, so without support from the sections that plan the working groups, it is difficult for them to scale up good approaches independently. While monitors are generally senior (many are former headmasters), not everyone in the education department thinks that they work effectively. Indeed, budgets for the Belu school monitors had been reduced in the last budget for that reason.

The government MELAYANI team needed to convince key staff in the education department that the approach being piloted by Ibu Agus was useful and was worth expanding. The team had struggled to fully engage key staff in the education department, such as the heads of primary or secondary schools and staff of their teams. While the head of the education department was nominally supportive of the MELAYANI team, providing them with platforms to discuss their findings, the level of his support for actual reform was not entirely clear.

Establishing broad awareness of their work led to an unexpected opportunity to generate broader support for their ideas in a politically salient way. Independent to the work of the MELAYANI team, but consistent with the *Bupati's*[8] focus on education, the *Bupati* changed the process of recruiting headmasters from one of appointment to a competitive process. In parallel, as part of a broader strategy to engage the education department, the MELAYANI team had been continually sharing results of their investigations and analysis. The primary school section of Belu's education department, which was working on the recruitment process, used the MELAYANI team's findings about the importance of the role of the headmaster to bolster their own argument to improve the training provided to new headmasters. They wanted to include "leadership" in the headmasters' training, an idea which found political support, but which needed further work to operationalize.

Translating the concept of headmaster leadership into practical and concrete behaviors became an entry point for linking the MELAYANI team's work to broader discussions happening within the education department which responded to a political directive from the highest level. Ibu Agus planned a headmaster's working group to discuss key elements of leadership, including supervision and providing constructive feedback to teachers. She invited Ibu Oi, who was working on the headmaster training, to the working group. Ibu Oi is also in charge of planning the working groups for primary school teachers. She was impressed by the positive changes she saw in Ibu Agus' headmaster working group. Ibu Oi brought the changes to the attention of her boss, the head of the primary school section, which brought further opportunities for discussion of the MELYANI team's reform ideas.

While it is difficult to point to a single action that prompted change, at least three practices contributed to a significant shift in the relationship between the MELAYANI government team and the primary school section of the education department: (i) continual sharing of information of the MELAYANI team's work with the broader staff of the education department, (ii) support for existing reform efforts (headmaster training) by the MELAYANI team and (iii) demonstrating value through pilot activities. Throughout, the MELAYANI team was consistent in emphasizing their focus on improving the quality of education in Belu which meant that they started to be "known" for something.

Getting Started Through Practical Iterations

The initial discussion between the MELAYANI team and the primary school section on headmasters' leadership developed into discussions on a wider range of issues. This further engagement of the broader education department staff empowered and invigorated

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[8] Elected district head.

the Melayani change process. Seeing the value from Ibu Agus' pilot, Ibu Oi asked for her assistance in planning the primary school teachers' and headmasters' working groups. As a result, Ibu Agus and the MELAYANI coach sat with Ibu Oi to ensure that the working groups could be adequately planned for the remainder of the year. For the first time, the head of the primary school section also joined the discussion and was more active in considering how the approach might work elsewhere. Unfortunately, the discussion also revealed that the headmasters' working group was overseen by the workforce section in the education department, while primary school teachers' working group by the primary school section. Linking up the two would be more difficult than expected.

As a start, Ibu Agus, Ibu Oi and the MELAYANI coach turned to planning the primary school teachers' working group, so that they could bring a proposal to the other section regarding headmasters' working group. The normal process for planning the working group meetings is to set the frequency (in this case every month), and the topics for all of the meetings at the beginning of the year. Based on her experience so far, Ibu Agus knew several topics that the teachers and headmasters still wanted to cover, so she could develop a plan for the next few months. However, she proposed that once those topics had been covered, she should talk to the teachers again or use the results of the meeting evaluations to determine new topics. Ibu Oi agreed to this approach. This is a simple but important change which handed more ownership of working group forums to teachers themselves, giving working group participants the ability to make the content more relevant to their day to day challenges.

Finally, Ibu Agus and Ibu Oi reached out to the head of the primary school section to consider funding. There are two existing sources of funding headmasters' and teachers' working groups: one from the (national) operational funding for schools (*Bantuan Operasional Sekolah*), which is planned and managed by schools themselves, and one from the local government budget. Monies from both sources are often released well after the start of the financial year, though local government funding tends to be more delayed than national funding. However, schools are often using monies that should be allocated for these meetings for other things. While the head of the primary school section had been aware of this diversion of resources, she had not been not concerned about it, since she did not feel the working group meetings were useful. With the "proof" provided by Ibu Agus that the working groups could be used more effectively, the head of primary school section was happy to support a reminder to schools that they can (and should) use existing budget to support working group meetings.

Improving Last Mile Process Quality—Moving Beyond Form Without Function

Improving the delivery of basic services like health and education which are provided through thousands of decentralized delivery points is particularly challenging. The high level of transaction volume (more than a million teachers, teaching different lessons each day), the high level of discretion involved in the teaching function, coupled with the low level of monitorability make it particularly challenging to implement improvement. Even with a good

curriculum, sufficient school books and well-maintained infrastructure, creating an effective learning environment in the classroom depends very much on how teachers are supported and supervised. It follows that the quality of the processes which are aimed at supporting and supervising teachers to make this kind of improvement matters. Processes which match the form but do not perform the function will not stimulate the desired change.

The work of the Belu MELAYANI team reveals that for 'last mile' of district to school level, two kinds of processes matter. First, much service delivery improvement takes place in workshops and meetings. Their effectiveness varies dramatically, but is a crucial factor in supporting effective change. Capacity development of teachers and headmasters through various working groups are a key medium for influencing the quality of teaching—but there is a high risk that these workshops can themselves be almost completely ineffective in achieving that objective if they are either poorly designed or implemented. The second key process for influencing the quality of teaching is the interaction between school monitors and teachers during school inspections. The challenges of service improvement therefore revolve around two challenges: (i) how to deliver a quality workshop, and (ii) how to achieve some level of consistency of implementation by school monitors who have very different levels of motivation and educational philosophies.

Even though Ibu Agus thought carefully about the content of the working group meetings,

it became clear that she needed to spend more time working through the details of how they would be implemented. For example, the working group on leadership, while well received by the education department, proved somewhat problematic in implementation. Although Ibu Agus and the MELAYANI coach felt that they had provided enough clarity around the concept of "leadership," the resource person that they had engaged (a headmaster himself) delivered a two-hour lecture on very general types and principles of leadership (including a discussion of Machiavelli) rather than a practical information that might help a headmaster in her or his day-to-day school management. Because the resource person was a highly respected individual, no one wanted to ask him to be more concrete or shorten his presentation. However, his lecture was followed by a useful discussion between headmasters about the real challenges that they face in their schools.

In debriefing discussions between Ibu Agus, the Belu coach and the World Bank mentor,[9] there was agreement that the use of "experts" needed to be more carefully guided: experts should be briefed ahead of time, and stopped if they go too far off topic. Topics for the working groups also needed to be narrow enough to allow for a focused discussion. In addition, the working group agenda needed to include more time for headmasters to talk to each other and ask questions of resource people (when available). Reflection on what worked and did not work in this event allowed Ibu Agus and the coach to think more carefully about how to manage the meetings themselves. Going

[9] MELAYANI coaches are trained in the MELAYANI/ PDIA approach. They live in the locations that they are supporting and provide day-to-day facilitation and assistance to the government-led MELAYANI teams working on their chosen problems. Coaches are supported by mentors (World Bank staff and senior consultant) with a deeper knowledge of PDIA, who provide assistance throughout the process, providing analytical guidance, trouble shooting and support in implementation of the process.

forward, these reflections will be important to communicate to other school monitors if they are to also implement a better working group approach. Perhaps the most important change to communicate is the importance of adopting a stance of ongoing critical reflection and continuous improvement about the way innovations, initiatives and programs are delivered.

Establishing a Virtuous Cycle of Iteration and Innovation

Small successes became the foundation for more ambitious reform. Involvement of Belu education department staff in the MELAYANI team generated increased momentum and a greater awareness of opportunities for innovation and reform. The primary school section began to develop a clearer vision of what they wanted to achieve. Discovering examples of the types of changes that the primary school section could make allowed them to see opportunities more easily in their daily work. These ranged from small changes, such as asking certain schools to share good practices at the routine all-school meeting, to re-thinking the routine training approaches. The MELAYANI coach has noticed a huge difference, noting "now I don't call them [the MELAYANI team], instead they are calling me with ideas." Some key approaches informed their increased effectiveness in stimulating positive change.

Focusing on poor performers

One set of changes worth highlighting is the shift in focus to lower performing schools, selected with more awareness of teachers' needs and locally-available resources. The primary school section has decided to focus on the bottom 50 schools. They are using test scores to look more carefully at what 'poor performance' means, focusing on schools with low scores across the board, rather than a mix of high and low clusters. In an initial meeting with the selected schools, they invited some better-performing schools to share good practices with their lower-performing counterparts.

Focusing on poor performers coupled with listening to the view of frontline workers led to another initiative. While initial discussions were focused on test preparation, they also asked teachers what a better training approach would look like. In response to what the teachers said, the primary school section has expanded the time for training for teachers in grades 1, 3 and 6. To implement this decision to expand the duration of training, they plan to use expert teachers, who have already received several rounds of training, to help.

Focus on how teachers teach, not just what is taught

As the MELAYANI team engaged more closely with the education department, it became possible to ask increasingly difficult questions about drivers of educational quality in Belu. With an increased focus on training, the MELAYANI mentor was able to revisit questions raised in initial discussions about how the education department approached how to teach (approaches to developing literacy and numeracy) as opposed to what to teach (the curriculum). The primary school section of the education department was interested in this question. She confirmed that current support for teachers focuses primarily on the content of the curriculum, and noted that she was not entirely

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[10] Members of the MELAYANI team and Ibu Agus' pilot headmaster working group, respectively.

sure who would be responsible for addressing "how" to teach, though speculated that it may be included in certification trainings provided by the workforce division.

Discussions with selected school monitors and headmasters[10] indicated that the primary school monitors could draw on materials from another development program which focused on working with teachers on how to teach literacy and numeracy. This discussion supported the team to become more aware of the need to focus on early grades, working to ensure children have a foundation of literacy and numeracy, rather than focusing only on test preparation in grade six for quick test results, which had been the approach to date. The primary school section immediately proposed using existing trainings as a place to start talking about how to teach and are starting to think about how they can best target early grade teachers.

Instituting a culture of continuous improvement

With multiple change responses being implemented, it is useful to remember that not everything works. Within the Belu education department, a tension remains between the primary school section that is supporting innovation and change, and the workforce section that is not engaged. Oversight of school monitors (who formally report to the head of the education department) is still weak and politically fraught. However, the Belu case study shows what can be achieved by just one section, if it is truly engaged and creative. For example, although the primary school section does not have any power to directly oversee the school monitors, they are responsible

for the implementation of the teachers' working groups, which the school monitors are required to support. Following changes to the practices of holding teachers' working groups, school monitors are now required to sign the attendance register and fill in a reporting format on the working group discussion itself. Direct sanctions may not be available to the team which is promoting the reforms, but evidence of attendance at working groups is still an important first step toward accountability.

What Have We Learned?

The examination of both good and bad school practices was important for the team, as it simultaneously demonstrated what was possible in Belu as well as highlighting gaps that still exist. The way that the team approached understanding the problem "built in" an examination of positive deviance and thus demonstrated potential solutions. Seeing positive examples motivated the team to think about how they could contribute, made it easier for them to discuss solutions with others and helped them have a vision to work toward.

An iterative approach can help local governments improve existing systems. The 2018 World Development Report: Learning to Realize Education's Promise[11], advocates an adaptive approach that encourages innovation and agility in developing local solutions to local problems in education. The experience in Belu demonstrates key benefits of this approach:

- **Iteration allows governments to start working with what they have, rather than "starting from scratch."** There is a tendency

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[11] World Bank. 2018. World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise. Washington DC: World Bank.

to jump to new program approaches when it becomes clear that something is not working. However, by taking a moment to determine specifically what was and was not working in existing approaches, opportunities for incremental improvements were revealed which could have substantial impact.

- **Iteration is often cost-efficient, as many challenges are related to poor incentives or weak implementation.** In this case study, working groups were not seen as relevant for teachers and headmasters, since their content was focused on what was important for district level administrators (developing test material) rather than what was important to teachers and headmasters (improving classroom learning and teacher supervision). Clarifying the goal of the working groups and re-orienting them toward learning outcomes may already be a step forward.

- **A gradual approach rather than a 'big bang' approach to reform provides time for the development of momentum and support, which in turn can expand opportunities for reform and allow the group to press into more difficult problems.** The cultivation of support from the Belu primary school section resulted in a much more dynamic approach to reform as staff of that part of the education department started to see opportunities across their portfolios. In addition, it made them more receptive to discussions about additional challenges that they might be able to address.

System improvements do not necessarily require changes to the plan and budget. In this case, money was available to finance the working groups, but was not being utilized

for that purpose. There is a risk that local government officials only think about changes to their programs when they are in the (very busy!) throes of developing yearly plans and budgets. This case shows that understanding key issues may require an investment of time, but may also lead to a better use of existing funding without the need for increased or altered allocation. Improving existing monitoring and evaluation approaches to respond to identified questions (and the use of the results that the produce) may help local governments to more routinely take a similar approach.

Reforms often focus on overarching changes to program structures, but details matter a lot in implementation, particularly where they concern the interactions from the district to the facility level. This disconnect on the "last mile" is often a challenge for civil servants since they may need different skills to navigate their bureaucracies and to understand implementation. A small example from this case is teacher and headmaster ownership of their working group content. District staff approached planning the working groups as a set of activities in a workplan that needed to be completed. They were not required to define the content in the plan but tend to do so in order to "finish" the plan so that all parts can be evaluated. However, seeing the value of teacher and headmaster engagement in choosing the topics, the education department modified their approach to fix the time of all of the working groups (every month), but only selecting content for the first four meetings, leaving the rest to be decided following discussions with participants.

It requires a certain amount of tenacity to remain focused on implementation, and a change of mindset to adopt a critical approach to

implementation realities. Within the Indonesian planning, budgeting and implementation cycle, there is little space or support to look closely at implementation: monitoring and evaluation are both underfunded and not particularly useful. Monitoring is generally understood to be checking program implementation against design and evaluation is often focused on financial disbursement. Neither examine whether a program is working or not. Often, it is assumed that if a policy is developed or program change made, it will be implemented as designed. There is little awareness of the possibility that policies may look very different on the ground than they did on the pages of a regulation or program design. If there is the sense that an activity is not working, then the assumption is often that it should be scrapped, and a new approach designed to replace it. The headmasters' and teachers' working groups are a good example of this. They were already being effectively de-funded in response to a perception that they were not working, but a closer look at how they could work better changed the mind of education department officials and stimulated enthusiasm to work on improving them through more focus on implementation.

It also requires resolve to work through refining and scaling up an improvement, even within a single district. The case demonstrates the potential of multiple small coordination and management challenges to improve the implementation of a routine activity. It shows both the power of iteration for improvement, and that every step forward has the potential to raise new questions. For example, an improved approach in the working group finally brought more serious attention to the performance of the school monitors, an issue that had been an 'elephant in the room' for some time. For members of the Belu education department, it can be exciting to see progress, but also daunting to deal with what may seem to be multiplying challenges that need to be overcome to effect meaningful change.

Continual communication of goals and results helped broaden support so others could identify opportunities for the team. There is often an assumption that local actors can identify all opportunities and act strategically. In reality, many actors (including those on the MELAYANI team) have partial information or limited power. Consistent communication from the team allowed external actors (the primary school section) to identify their own opportunities that were aligned with the MELAYANI team's work.

Bringing These Lessons to Scale

The process described in this note – digging into the technical minutiae of a specific issue and working through the details of reform – are less amenable than previous steps to the application of a generic tool to be used by that local governments. This is due to the fact that solutions need to be tightly linked to the underlying problems uncovered in previous stages of the analysis.

However, the central government can play an important role in ensuring that there is space for local governments to examine their performance and work on scaling up improvements in the following ways:

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[12] In general, the findings in Belu echo international discussions: World Bank. 2018. World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise. Washington DC: World Bank. They also are similar to those found elsewhere in Indonesia: See Arlianti, Rina and Sheldon Shaeffer. 2019. Education Innovations in East Java: A review and analysis of INOVASI's stocktake study. Jakarta Indonesia: INOVASI.

Central government actors could reward districts for concrete examples of scaling out improvements. There is currently a strong focus on innovation at the local government level. The central government is very interested in documenting new practices. If it took a similar interest in documenting and sharing not just the content of good practices, but how good practices spread, they could provide some important motivation to districts to look at how processes for stimulating change.

Central government program managers could think more carefully about how to create the "preconditions for success" in the form of functioning school communities. The findings of the team in Belu echo the conclusions of other work that demonstrate the value of "strong leadership, empowered teachers and a close collaboration within the whole school community"[12] in supporting innovation and growth. In addition to thinking about the technical needs of teachers and headmasters, attention and support needs to be given to how they interact. This, in turn, may require a shift in mindset at the national level as to how change happens.