

Capacity Building of Local School Boards to Utilise Special Education Fund Data

A pilot project implemented by E-Net Philippines
with support from Open Data Lab Jakarta under the Open Data for Transparency Project

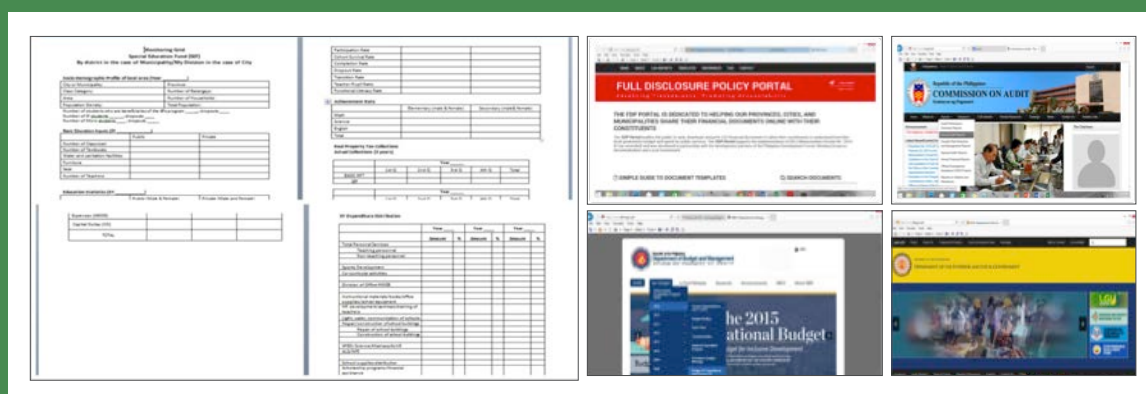
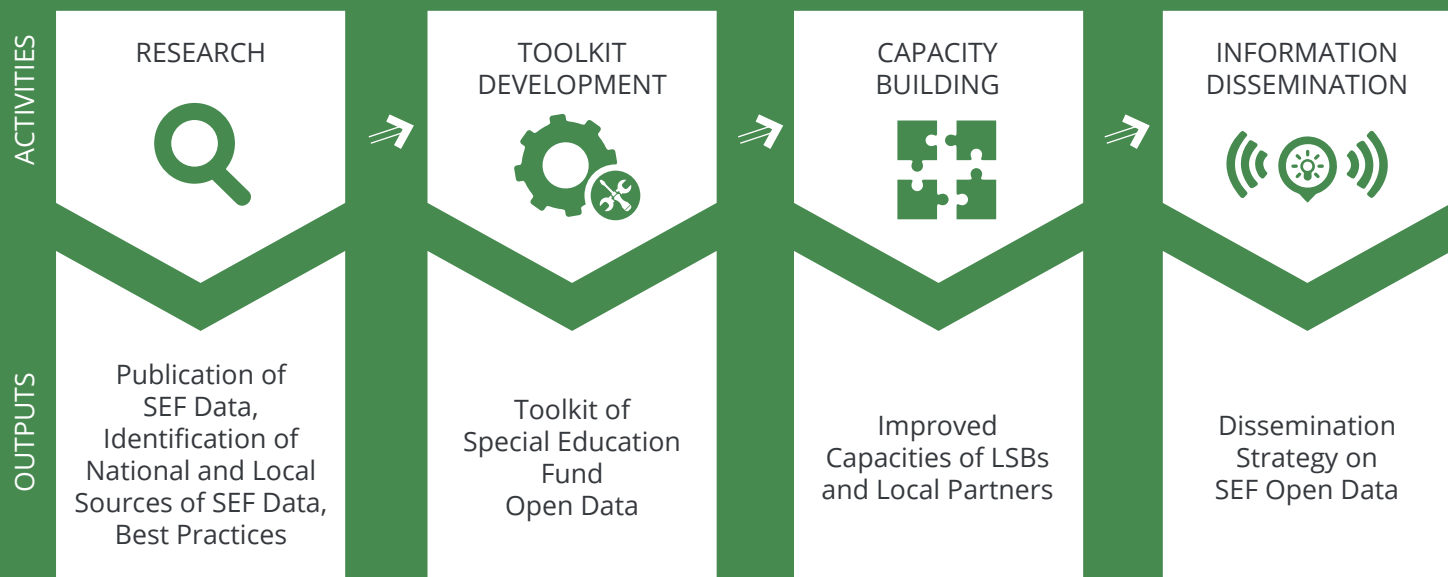
Funding for this initiative is provided by the Southeast Asia Technology and Transparency Initiative

BACKGROUND

The Philippine government, through the Full Disclosure Policy, requires all local government units (LGU) to make local financial data available online and in open formats. However, not all LGUs comply with this policy and the budgeting process remains non-participatory. For instance, the Special Education Fund (SEF) only contains estimated and not actual amounts, and its utilization report does not contain sufficient detail to allow proper planning or monitoring.

E-NET PHILIPPINES advocates for better use of the SEF by building the capacity of Local School Boards (LSB) on the planning, utilisation, and monitoring of education funds. The LSBs are mandated to allocate the SEF to meet the supplementary needs of the public school system. The SEF is equivalent to 1% of the assessed value of every real property and is collected together with real property taxes paid to a local government.

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS



From left to right:
SEF Monitoring Grid,
National sources of
SEF Data (Full
Disclosure Policy Portal,
Commission on Audit,
Department of Budget
and Management,
Department of the
Interior and Local
Government)



E-Net Philippines team together with the participants of the Special Education Fund Open Data workshop

FACILITATING FACTORS

- **Strategic fit with E-NET's organisational goal and advocacy.** E-Net Philippines board and members are open to the open data concept and very active in providing directions for engaging LGUs and advocating for improved local education governance and financing.
- **Strong collaboration with government.** The partnership with the alliance of municipalities, PALMA-PB, led to high level of support during the project implementation. The project is perfectly timed to the reform initiatives launched by the local legislative council of Kidapawan City.
- **Support from mentors and the Open Data Lab Jakarta team.** The project allows E-NET to have freedom to implement the project but with support from mentors and the Lab.

HINDERING FACTOR

SEF data is not available in open formats. The challenge is that most of the data received are in printed format, and the project team had to encode and convert SEF data to machine-readable format so that these can be analysed and disseminated.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Proper planning, utilization, and monitoring of the education fund rely on a functioning LSB. LSBs are not always functional in every town, city and province. There is a need for continued advocacy with the Department of Interior and Local Government to ensure compliance of LGUs. The LSB is one avenue that civil society organizations can influence how education funds are spent at the local level.
- Open data provides opportunities for citizen participation only when the local government is open. Open data happens through partnerships, and having a champion inside the bureaucracy is critical. E-NET was fortunate to have reformers within its government partners. Government partners also need to have the credibility in order to earn the trust of LGUs, and must possess expertise in both the technology and non-technology aspects in open data.
- Capacity building is important for open education data to bring positive results. Government institutions and local civil society organizations constitute the LSB. Without the capacity to understand and analyze education data and use it for priority education expenditures, the SEF will not result in better education outcomes.