

Lesotho School Visit M&E Report 2009

Schools visited: 13 (target= 50)

Introduction

The demonstrated performance of the Lesotho Hub was disappointing for 2009, which was reflected quite strongly across the M&E system. The quality of the reports was relatively high, but with only 13 schools visited it is difficult to verify impact. Largely on this basis the Hub management has been replaced, which represents a very positive correlation between M&E findings and decisions taken by the board in-country. The data collected in Lesotho is still very useful, and has been significant in enhancing Camara's organisational expertise and approach.

1. Student Interviews

In eight of the thirteen schools students reported not being given enough time with the computers. This is somewhat surprising, given that in two of these schools students reported accessing the lab twice a week, and in one school reported using it up to four times a week. Added to this is the fact that the median number of students per computer at 23.4 is the lowest of any of the Hub countries, which is probably as low an average as Camara can realistically expect to achieve. There certainly seems to be an issue in terms of managing expectations in this respect. Many students express frustration with even two computer classes a week, which is more than in many Irish schools.

In two schools students emphasised the importance of the computers in terms of competing in their local science fairs, which is surprising but clearly welcome. In two schools teachers had divided their students into groups of five, because of power and congestion issues. In one of the schools with supposed congestion issues there were 20 computers for 600 students, which should easily have allowed for a computer class a week. In this context the notion of putting five students to a computer seems absurd, and the need for teacher training in computer laboratory management is patent.

The student interviews generally convey a sense of optimism. Students are clearly excited to be using computers, and grateful to have access to them. In one school students were particularly appreciative of the fact that their school was given computers despite being in a relatively inaccessible mountainous area.

2. Teacher Interviews.

Teachers were also very satisfied with the Camara computers. Congestion was again a recurring theme, and there is no suggestion that teachers in any school have considered splitting classes. In one school teachers noted that when their students go to university they will not panic with ICT like they themselves did. One teacher expressed concern that Linux is not popular in Lesotho, and thus students will face difficulties when they leave school. In another school, teachers requested a local-area network.

3. Beneficiary Profile

Total Number of computers received	2,274
Computers accounted for	420 ¹ (18.5%)
Mean lab size	32.3 computers
Median lab size	20 computers
Computers broken	28 (7%)
Computers missing	26 (6%)
Computers functioning in the labs	368 (87.6%)
Approximate total number of students	5,598
Mean number of students per school	430.6
Median number of students per school	468
Median number of students per computer	23.4
Mixed schools	13 (100%)
Boys' schools	0 (0%)
Girls Schools	0 (0%)
Schools using Windows XP	7 (54%)
Schools using Linux	6 (46 %)

The low number of computers accounted for is very disappointing. The target agreed with the Hub management at the start of 2009 was 50 schools, but there was no effort made to achieve it. All of the schools were visited within a two-week period, despite salary and expenses allocations for an M&E Officer for four months. Another worrying aspect is that one school that received 60 computers in August 2008 was found to have 13 broken and 20 missing in March of the following year. There is a decided need for more robust systems, with rigorous monitoring of schools.

The fact that such a large proportion of the Camara computers are still functioning in the lab is certainly positive. In view of the fact that there is so little evidence of maintenance

¹ All subsequent figures are derived from this number.

support this high level of functionality suggests that the machines as delivered are quite robust, and subject to relatively low levels of theft. Once Camara becomes more dynamic in its monitoring, maintenance and recycling functions these performances should improve further.

That all of the schools are mixed gender is certainly positive, and it will be interesting next year to ascertain as to what overall proportion are girls. There seems to be a very high proportion of rural schools, and the religious profile includes a mix of Catholics, Protestants and Muslims in virtually every school. The M&E Officer reported that most of the schools are relatively poor, and in this context it is interesting to consider the prices charged by schools:

Schools that charge students to use computers	12
Schools that do not charge students to use computers	1
Mean charge per quarter	79.6 Maloti (€7.32)
Median charge per quarter	90 Maloti (€8.27)
Lowest charge per quarter (excluding zero charge)	50 Maloti (€4.64)
Highest charge per quarter	125 Maloti (€11.61)

4. The Labs

Schools with computers in good condition	11 (85%)
Schools with computers in fair condition	2 (15%)
Schools with computers in poor condition	0 (0%)
Labs in good condition	8 (62%)
Labs in fair condition	3 (23%)
Labs in poor condition	2 (15%)
Schools suitable to receive more computers	9 (69%)
Schools not suitable to receive more computers	4 (31%)

The recurring problem in terms of analysing the computers and labs is that there is no uniform standard. The M&E Officers will require further training in this respect so as to ensure that the assessments are robust and credible. Nonetheless, the officer in Lesotho was quite technically proficient. As such, his assessment that the vast majority of computers are in good condition is certainly positive. He also stressed that in one school student proficiency was undermined by the fact that the computers were shared. Another school has large numbers of orphans and vulnerable students, who are at the core of Camara's mission. An issue in one school was that the lab was not waterproof, which reduced the life-span of the computers.

The Officer reported that one school, which was owned by the Catholic Church, was missing a computer which had been taken by the local priest. In another school teachers had taken 20 computers for personal use, which were missing from the lab. In the same school 13 computers were broken. The most recurring assessment is that there is too much congestion in the computer labs, with a relatively low correlation with the computer to student ratios.

September 2009