The challenges in education are systemic and the DEPED cannot address them all. Some of the challenges are unique to a locality and communities are in a better position to solve their problems.

I am so proud to use LGUs in ARMM as a model on how communities can work together to improve access and quality of basic education. Under the leadership of local government leaders, education reform can be participatory, transparent, and effective.

**How can children go to school if there are no roads?** The Mayor from Datu Paglas has taken to task the pavement of roads to help children walk long distances from their homes to schools.

**How can you prevent child labor?** Barangays in Upi serve as lookout for child labor and “question and pressure parents” to send their children to school.

**How can you solve the shortage of teachers?** Local School Boards in ARMM earmark funds not only from the Special Education Fund but from other sources to hire “volunteer teachers”. They are paid P1, 000 to P2, 000 per month. Gov. Toto of Maguindanao augments local funds to hire more volunteer teachers. Paglas appropriates funds for testing fee of teachers in the Licensure Examination (LET) and subsidizes the conduct of review classes to enhance their chances of success.

**How can you empower parents to be more involved in supporting schools?** Parents from Upi feel “masigasig” because they are part of education planning. Instead of traditional speech-giving, education summits chaired by mayors are workshops for parents and provide them with opportunities to talk to the Mayor and the Datu with confidence and without fear.

**How do you develop better citizenship among children and parents?** The mayor from Barira uses the help of the UZtads in developing good values. The Paglas mayor says, “Ang takot dapat hindi sa baril kung hindi sa Panginoon.” Pastors from Protestant churches help in value formation in Tawi Tawi.

**How do you address the needs of OSCY?** ARMM LGUs run livelihood and literacy classes. They also hire trained-OSCY to handle carpentry, masonry, electrical services in their localities.
How can you encourage taxpayers to pay the real property tax? Schoolchildren from Upi use the community radio to encourage taxpayers to pay the SEF. The SEF is used to buy simple instructional materials such as cartolina, pentel pen, pencils, which classrooms sorely lack. Taxpayers who pay their taxes are entitled to one raffle coupon and the winner from the draw gets a motorcycle at the end of the year.

How can a barangay with inadequate funds repair schools or buy school equipment? Barangays in Siasi pool their funds through a P5,000 monthly contribution to a “paluwagan”. Lots are drawn to determine the order in drawing funds.

How can oversight be provided against misuse of funds, “palakasan” system, and excessive absenteeism of school officials? Barangay officials, parent-leaders, and NGOs participate in LSB meetings with the mayors and governors to report inefficiencies. ARMM LGUs will develop their own websites where they can post budgets, contracts and other public documents.

Noteworthy reforms in ARMM, and in other LGUs in the country, can only be mainstreamed if policies are consistent with the spirit of inclusive governance.

1. School-based-management should move towards community-based management. Many school officials are still wary of greater involvement of LGU officials. In some cases, these are justified, because of weaknesses of LGUs in governance.
2. LGUs learn best through mentoring and coaching by peer-mayors. Mentoring is not a one-time activity but should be sustained and should be structured.
3. The performance of LGU and school officials should be measured through a system that is based on indicators using outputs instead of inputs. Non-performers should truly be sanctioned and performers should be rewarded.
4. Devolution of basic education to LGUs can be phased-in using an asymmetric model, i.e. LGUs that pass set benchmarks can be given greater autonomy or funds can be devolved. The system follows the accreditation process for schools.
5. Local school Boards should be reinvented using the J. Robredo model, i.e. membership and functions should be broadened. Budgeting and disbursement should be participatory and transparent.
6. The capacity of school officials to engage in participatory governance and practice transparency should be built. Skills in governance should be used as one of the basis in hiring and promoting school officials.
7. Strategies to generate more revenues for education need “thinking outside the box”. The traditional revenue-sources cannot work well in local communities. The benefit principle is a more effective handle.

Indeed, it takes a village to raise a child! But this will take a paradigm shift and sustained capacity building of local leaders and school officials.