A RESOURCEBOOK ON THE G-WATCH MONITORING EXPERIENCE

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INTRODUCTION

This resource book distills seven years of Government Watch's experience in monitoring government agencies. In those seven years, G-Watch monitored the Departments of Health, Social Welfare and Development, Education, Public Works and Highways, and the Bureau of Customs, from medicines to school buildings, highways to vaccines, milk to used clothing. From the agencies and affected officials, the results of G-Watch's monitoring has elicited defensiveness, anger, hostility, denial and in several, memorable instances, openness and efforts to change. These are the price – and the rewards – of promoting accountability and exercising citizenship.

The resource book can be read on its own and as a resource or reference in conducting a training on monitoring and evaluating the *implementation of awarded government contracts*. The modules for conducting a quick and dirty training on monitoring are appended to this resource book. Implementation of the awarded contract here begins with the production of the goods such as the printing of textbooks and extends to their delivery and receipt by the designated unit, or in some cases, by the beneficiaries themselves. The procurement process being a sequential, linear process in which the commencement of one step depends upon the completion of a previous one, it may be rightly asked why G-Watch concentrates its energies and resources at the beginning rather than the end. One can convincingly argue that failure to exercise due diligence at the beginning compromises, if not condemns to outright failure, the success of the process. The decision to intervene at the latter stages of the procurement process was brought about by a confluence of events and reasons. When G-Watch started, the present-day Government Procurement Reform Act (GPRA) had yet to be filed as a bill in Congress. There was no legal basis for citizen's participation in the bidding proceedings.

Second, since the project's design was meant to elicit citizens' participation, it was assumed that the best avenue for their participation was at the contract implementation stage when the goods actually arrive or when the project is actually initiated in their localities. In contrast, the bidding was conducted in the central office which is inaccessible to many ordinary citizens.

Third, scarce resources and personnel compelled G-Watch to specialize. When G-Watch was starting, an equally worthy initiative was also being conceptualized, the Procurement Watch, whose mandate is precisely the training of civil society monitors and the monitoring of the procurement process.

G-Watch did "complete" the procurement cycle as it were (with the exception of participation in the procurement planning and monitoring payments) with the Textbook Count project. However, the operations of Textbook Count, while referred to in this resource book and used in the training modules appended to this resource book, can be a subject of a separate monograph or resource book all on its own.

G-Watch is the first to admit that the goods it is inspecting may have already been overpriced or the specifications have been wrong. The bidders may have colluded to rig the bidding. Yet because many things can go wrong even after a transparent and fair bidding, finishing well is equally as important as beginning properly.

G-Watch monitored the projects of and the goods procured by national government agencies. It did not monitor services or the LGUs. How relevant then are the experiences and lessons contained in this resource book?

When this project was at the conception and middle stages, the original plan was to write a monitoring resource book for the major government offices that G-Watch monitored. Present and former G-Watch monitors who specialized in the agencies wrote short, separate guides or mini-resource books on the process followed and the tools used in monitoring the different agencies. However, their transformation into full-blown, separate resource books was discontinued in the middle of the project due to the needs of the audience. Since this resource book is an aid to the localization of monitoring and understanding that documents accessible to G-Watch monitors who live in Metro Manila where the central offices are located may not be accessible to those outside the capital, it was decided to concentrate on what is generic or universal in project or procurement monitoring regardless of the goods or government office to be monitored, national or sub-national. The documents, the law governing procurement, and the process of contract implementation itself may change but the principles or basic steps of monitoring do not. However, this resource book recognizes the work that has been done by G-Watch monitors in writing the guides and retains them as case studies or training resources that the trainer may use to illustrate the principles and process of monitoring.

By writing this resource book, we in G-Watch do not pretend to be experts. We continue to learn as we engage government. This resource book does not intend to say the final word on the subject. Neither does it pretend to exhaust everything on the subject. The discussions here are meant to point the way for the reader to further study and exploration.

This resource book is an invitation for more Filipinos to join us in this learning enterprise and to exercise the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. For many of us, citizenship ends when we cast our votes during elections or when we grudgingly pay our taxes. Rarely do we inquire or investigate how and on what our taxes are spent, and if the various things we spend for actually reach their targeted recipients in a timely fashion, in excellent quality and in the expected quantities. We in G-Watch hope that by helping build capacity, we embolden more ordinary citizens to stand up and achieve the greatness that our leaders tell us this nation is destined for. Believe that the best is yet to come.

BEGINNING TO MONITOR

In beginning to monitor any government project, there are four steps to consider:

- conducting a rapid assessment;
- deciding on the scope and scale of monitoring;
- developing the monitoring tool; and
- recruiting and training the monitors.

Conducting a Rapid Assessment.

The first step in beginning to monitor any government agency or project is conducting a rapid assessment or rapid appraisal. As the name implies, rapid assessment is a quick, qualitative inquiry aimed at gaining a preliminary understanding of a situation. This understanding of the preliminary situation can help the would-be monitors decide if it is feasible and appropriate to monitor a government program or project. A rapid assessment should take no more than a few hours of interviews and a few more for reading secondary literature or materials on the subject. The rapid inquiry seeks knowledge on:

- Quantity, quality, cost, and prescribed delivery times for the item.
- Total quantities and amount procured for the year;
- Regularity of purchase;
- How the item is procured;
- Usual sources or suppliers of the item;
- Delivery system for the item;
- Laws affecting the agency or the item being procured;
- How the items are allocated among different recipients;
- Agencies or units within agencies, including persons, responsible for procurement (understood here as planning to bidding) and for delivering or receiving the item;
- Agencies that are not involved in procurement and delivery but can affect the performance of the supplier or the delivery, e.g. the Department of Budget and Management (DBM);
- Issues concerning the procurement and the delivery of the item.

If a project were being monitored, the rapid assessment should inquire into the goals or objectives of the project, the project design, the project components, the project's work plan, the organizational set-up of the project office, the different units within and outside the agency that are involved in the delivery or in receiving the item, those agencies that are uninvolved in operations but can nonetheless affect the performance of the project, and issues concerning the project.

G-Watch begins the rapid assessment approaching the agency concerned to inform it about its intention to monitor some projects or some of the goods it procures. G-Watch normally approaches reform-minded officials in the agency or officials known to G-Watch's personnel or the Ateneo de Manila University's officials. The purpose of this is to get someone, especially in the upper echelons of the agency, to champion the monitoring within the Department. This official usually refers G-Watch to the relevant unit. In other cases, G-Watch directly approaches the planning bureau or the project management office. In some cases, the agency approaches G-Watch directly, usually after the public presentation, to ask if it can help in monitoring its procurement or the institutions under its wings like a member of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)'s planning department who sought G-Watch's help in monitoring conditions in the institutions managed by the Department, i.e. home for the aged, women who are victims of violence, children and youths in conflict with the law, orphans, etc.

During the discussion with the agency, G-Watch obtains relevant documents from the project management office or the planning bureau like the Program of Work for infrastructure projects, the procurement plan, copies of the law, the project concept paper, progress or monitoring reports, etc.

It may happen that after the initial meeting with the agency, G-Watch would decide not to monitor the project. For instance in 2001, G-Watch had initially planned to monitor the Comprehensive Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). However, because CIDSS followed a set process consisting of steps that have to be followed in sequence, the project management office advised G-Watch to select a site that was in step one. Monitoring a site in the middle of the process would fail to give a complete picture, since G-Watch had not witnessed the earlier stages. G-Watch heeded the advice since the monitoring time would exceed the deadlines set by the funding agency.

The rapid assessment, especially the interview, can shed light on the peculiar way by which common words are used by different agencies in the reports. The word completed would normally mean that the project had accomplished its goals and objectives. However, G-Watch learned that in the jargon of the DPWH, "completed" meant that the totality of funds had been disbursed, not that the road had been finished and was ready for use.

Deciding on the Scope and Scale of the Monitoring

After learning about the delivery system of the agency, the next step is deciding on the *scope and scale* of the monitoring. The *scale* refers to the number of areas to be monitored while *scope* refers to the number of steps in the procurement process that would be monitored. In the beginning, when G-Watch was still climbing up the learning curve, scale meant selecting projects across the broad geographical divisions of the Philippines like Mindanao, Visayas, and Luzon. For the Department of Public Works and Highways, G-Watch selected infrastructure projects in Mindanao, Visayas, and Luzon. The selection was done randomly without paying too much attention to the length, the strategic importance, or the cost of the road or the flood control project. The infrastructure projects that were monitored were either completed or nearing completion. For completed infrastructure projects, the exercise was strictly speaking one of evaluation, not monitoring.

In the pre-Textbook Count monitoring of textbooks, the selection of school districts to monitor followed the Department of Education's (DepEd) zoning: two in Luzon, one in the Visayas, and one in Mindanao. The districts were chosen by the volume of deliveries; those districts with the largest deliveries were monitored. The criterion was the magnitude, as the purpose of the monitoring was to detect leakages in the system. Accessibility of the districts was also a consideration. Because of funding and time constraints, the G-Watch team did not monitor deliveries to schools. Only in 2004 did G-Watch monitored deliveries down to the school level. In this case, distance from the district and the school's accessibility were the criterion for selection, with the farthest and less accessible schools in the districts with large deliveries being monitored. In both these cases, monitoring was done after the fact not during the delivery itself. Hence, like with DPWH, the exercise was more like an evaluation than monitoring.

In scope, the pre-Textbook Count monitoring focused on only one step in the contract implementation stage of the procurement process: the delivery to districts and the delivery from districts to schools. It was a single step for both since two different sets of textbooks were monitored. Had G-Watch monitored the same set of textbook as it was delivered to the district and from the district to the schools, the scope would have been two steps. In contrast, the Textbook Count in its third iteration monitored the procurement process from the pre-bid conference down to the delivery to the districts. Included in that process was inspection at the printing plant levels. The monitoring was done in real time not *ex post facto*. Only the delivery from district to school was not monitored, though the secretariat for the Textbook Count and its counterpart at the DepEd did receive reliable reports from Coca-Cola Bottlers Philippines, Inc. regarding the quantity of textbooks the softdrinks company voluntarily transported from the district to far-flung schools.

G-Watch's monitoring of relief goods distribution concentrated only on two stages: the storage and inventory of used clothing and food at the national and regional levels and their distribution to Local Government Units (LGU). G-Watch did not monitor the distribution of these to the ultimate end-users, the victims of natural and man-made calamities. Doing so would require that G-Watch be actually present during and immediately after a calamity had happened, the times when relief operations were conducted. In place of real-time monitoring, the G-Watch team did a quick, *ex post facto* client satisfaction survey among the recipients of relief goods.

Related to scale, an issue often raised in public presentations is how representative are the findings, particularly the sampling or selection of the sites. G-Watch is the first to admit that its sampling/selection is *purposive* and not random; that is, its selection is driven by operational rather than academic or statistical concerns. For instance, the 2004 study on onward distribution of textbooks (from district to schools) focused on schools that were farthest and less accessible from the district on the hypothesis that if the delivery system could be improved for these schools, those nearest would also benefit. The delivery system is only as good as its weakest or farthest or less accessible destination. In the case of the pre-Textbook Count monitoring of textbook deliveries, the purpose was to detect leakages. Hence, the focus was on those districts in the delivery zones with the largest volume of deliveries. For the monitoring of relief goods distribution, scale was not an issue. Sites were selected on the basis of having experienced a calamity in a set period of time. The G-Watch team selected sites in Mindanao, Visayas, and Luzon but comparison across sites could not be made since the cause of the calamity and the magnitude of the effects differed across sites.

Related to scope, the usual question is: how extensive should the scope be? How many steps in the project cycle or procurement cycle should be monitored? G-Watch monitored only the delivery of outputs stage or the contract implementation and delivery stages of the procurement process. As the cases above show, this monitoring did not even go as far as the end-users and was not conducted in real-time or during the actually delivery itself. Early on, there were plans to monitor the whole public expenditure management cycle. The Government Watch had a sister project under the Philippine Governance Forum (PGF) umbrella called the Budget Advocacy Project (BAP) that sought to increase budget literacy among the public and promote civil society participation in the budgeting process (initially at the national level). The initial plan was for BAP to track the budget and expenditures and for G-Watch to track the outputs. A comprehensive report would be produced similar to what had been done in Uganda where the flow of funds was tracked from the central level down to the schools. Rapid assessment and experience gained in the monitoring of the drugs procured by DOH's Regional Offices immediately disabused G-Watch of the notion.

First the General Appropriations Act that emerged from Congress was not a useful guide for what agencies could actually spend. It was also a poor indication of how much money was actually available for say, textbook procurement. The crucial factor was the Cash Program of the National Government that spelled out how much cash really was available for spending. Hence, civil society could be successful in influencing the budget but everything boiled down to how much revenue the government was able to generate or collect.

Second delays in the bidding, e.g. failure in bidding can lead to delays in spending and consequently delays in contract implementation. The monitoring of drugs procured by DOH's Regional Offices showed that two years elapsed from the date of pre-qualification to the delivery of the drugs to the Rural Health Units (RHUs). Hence, if a citizens' group were to decide to monitor how the 2006 budget was spent, it would have to wait till 2008 or 2009 to ascertain if the items had actually been delivered to where the end-users could access them. If it were to monitor 2006 reports, the citizens' groups would have to retrace the steps from the delivery back to the budget – or more accurately – the Cash Program of 2004 or 2003. Given the reality that the donors operate on a yearly basis and demand performance within that timeframe, the citizens' group cannot wait till 2008 to monitor. There remains a basic temporal disconnect between the advocacy for the current budget (2006 with outputs to be delivered in 2008) and the monitoring on goods, procured using the budget of two or three years ago.

If responsiveness to need were to be a parameter of monitoring, certainly government would always be unresponsive, since the procurement of 2004 would rarely match the needs of 2006. The 2004 budget were made on assumptions based partially on historical performance of the previous years, not on the requirements of the date of delivery, 2006.

In conclusion, deciding on the scope and scale of the project depends on a combination of factors: the hypothesis or the purpose for which the monitoring is being done, the financial resources available to the monitor, and the number of personnel.

Developing the Monitoring Tool

When G-Watch started monitoring and evaluating government projects in 2000, it used a simple matrix or table that compared planned outputs against those actually accomplished according to the four parameters of quantity, quality, cost and time. The tool had a column for the monitor's observations. The agency was also given space for their responses. The matrix was purposely kept simple so that ordinary citizens can use it.

	Road X to Z.		Monitor's Observations	Agency's Response
	Planned	Actual		
Quantity				
Cost				
Quality				
Time				

Over time and with more experience, G-Watch monitors were trained to zero in on particular indicators. For example, in road projects, timeliness is a "key variable." Delays can result in the price escalation of construction materials. With no additional budget, the DPWH would have to make a decision to either reduce quantity (in terms of kilometers) or compromise on quality. Hence, even if the project has not been completed, discrepancy between what is planned or expected is certain to happen, all other things being held equal.

In later rounds of monitoring, G-Watch developed more elaborate checklists that fleshed out the specific attributes or elements of the four general parameters of quantity, cost, quality and time. For school building projects, the checklist compared the specifications in the Program of Work with the actual building, e.g. presence or absence of ceilings, provision of toilets and utilities like water and electricity, type of windows, painted or unpainted.[1] G-Watch has a sample checklist, which was used in the Bayanihang Eskwela project.

Through experimentation, not to mention mistakes learned along the way, G-Watch has isolated a few rules of thumb or principles in developing checklists. Here is a checklist to develop checklists:

- ✓ The checklist should match the situation of the users and the purposes of the monitoring.

In the zeal and excitement to start monitoring, the tendency is to overload a checklist with items or attributes to monitor. For the first draft or prototype of the tool, this is good practice. It is better to be comprehensive, suspending the inner censor, than to find out when processing the data, that important information has not been gathered simply because the tool is silent about it. However, when the full-fledged monitoring takes off, the tool should be manageable, not unwieldy, and adapted to situation of the monitors.

[1] Since the buildings had been finished, turned over, and was being used by the schools, G-Watch's visits were more to evaluate than to monitor.

In monitoring infrastructure projects, for example, it must be kept in mind that the monitors are not engineers but ordinary citizens. Hence, it may not be appropriate to list as one of the indicators, the strength of materials being used or the kind of soil that the road is being built on. This requires so-called expert knowledge, that of a civil engineer or a geologist.

However, the checklist should accommodate space for local knowledge. If the monitors are inhabitants of the place where the road is passing, it is important to flag or note in the tool the residents' experience with the road. If previous roads have a tendency to subside and slide, the road may suffer from the inherent instability of the ground or the softness of the soil, not from faulty construction or the use of substandard materials.

The length and comprehensiveness of the tool depends also on the purposes and scope of the monitoring. If the purpose of monitoring is to compare the performance of an agency across several municipalities, districts, the monitoring tool may be designed to focus on a few variables common to the same or similar projects across several municipalities and districts. If, however, the monitoring is to be concentrated in a few localities, the tool may be more comprehensive than the first. The purpose, the kind of project, the situation of the monitors, and the available resources (time and finances) – all of these influence the design of the tool.

- ✓ At least in the initial stages of the monitoring, the checklist must be so designed that the indicators can be verified on the spot using any of the five senses or a combination of them aided by basic, everyday, readily accessible instruments.

Since ordinary citizens will be using the tool or checklist, the indicators listed must be immediately verifiable by any or a combination of the five senses. *At least in the initial stages*, it must not require the citizens to gather a sample, bring these to a laboratory (assuming there is one in the vicinity), and pay for the test themselves. The cost and complexity can turn off volunteers. The most that can be expected is for the volunteers to use a ruler, tape measure, or a measuring stick. For infrastructure projects, this can be used to measure the thickness of the walls and the pavement, the circumference of water pipes and the steel bars, etc.

Admittedly, this is a limiting factor when monitoring consumable goods like drugs, noodles, and milks. There is simply no way outside the laboratory to ascertain if the capsule is really Mefenamic Acid as labeled and not some other drug. For the quality of drugs, G-Watch uses the expiry date and the date of manufacture. Noting these down enables the monitors to flag important issues. Knowing the standard shelf life for certain drugs and comparing this with what is written on the drug packaging raises the possibility of misrepresentation by manufacturers and by implication, hints at their reputation, i.e. their being legitimate or fly-by-night. There is also the risk that the drugs may actually be expired even if the expiry date is still weeks or months away. To be able to raise this during the agency presentation, the monitor notes down the batch number.

Other proxy indicators that G-Watch monitors use for quality are color, the condition of the packaging, and other observable characteristics, e.g. noodles, brittleness, softness, powdery appearance

Standards	Findings	Issues	Monitor's Notes
Standard Shelf Life (According to the Industry) of a Particular Drug	Expiry Date – Date of Manufacture = Shelf Life as Stated by the Manufacturers.	Excess may mean that the drug has actually expired. For laboratory testing. Misrepresentation by the manufacturer Reputation of the company.	Batch Number.
Expected Color	Actual Color	Possibly Expired. For Laboratory Testing	Batch Number and/or Item Number

The emphasis is on "the initial stages of the monitoring" because as the monitors gain experience, skill, and hopefully enthusiasm, they may be motivated to learn more. As the volunteers build their knowledge, the tool will also evolve. In monitoring as in many things in life, it is wisdom to begin simply and move gradually to more complex, technical matters.

✓ Make space for the monitor's observations and for the agency's initial responses.

The tool should provide adequate space for the monitor to record his/her observations and for the agency's initial responses to the findings. For example while monitoring the Langongan-Roxas section of the ADB-funded Puerto Princesa-Roxas Road, the G-Watch monitors noted that the rented vehicle passed through a bridge that was cut in half in a stretch of dirt road. Further investigation revealed that the stretch was a subject of dispute between the landowner and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) regarding compensation. The land was used as conveyance with the permission of the owner. It was not clear if the portion of land used as a road had been segregated and duly annotated in the owner's land title. G-Watch also learned that the surrounding land had been placed under agrarian reform and that CLOAs (Certificate of Land Ownership Award) had been issued to the beneficiaries.

Getting Buy-In from the Different Agencies

Let us admit it: very few like to have someone look over his or her shoulder while at work. For this reason, resistance has to be factored at all stages of the monitoring, even at the rapid assessment stage. Given the top-down, command-and-control structure of the government's bureaucracy, no monitoring gets done without the blessing or an approving nod at the top. G-Watch usually asks around for the names of "friendly" and "reform-minded" officials in the upper echelon of a department, officials that are known by G-Watch monitors themselves and by the Ateneo School of Government officials or known by their friends and colleagues. It then approaches these officials to sound them out regarding their interest in monitoring certain projects in the Department. It may happen that these officials are interested in monitoring other things, as what happened with the monitoring of relief goods. During a meeting with G-Watch, then-Secretary Corazon Soliman of the DSWD mentioned the monitoring of relief goods as an option, which G-Watch eventually took up. It may happen that public officials may have other causes in mind. One official from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) that G-Watch talked to was interested in finding out the magnitude of ghost teachers in the payroll of the Department of Education. Still other officials may have specific, more personal, interest, as was the case when one official wanted G-Watch to find out how much of his agency's budget for public relations went into supporting a politician running for a national position. Presumably, the information would be used to leverage for an appointment to a higher position. This only goes to show that monitoring is by no means a benign or neutral activity that can be divorced from political or organizational realities. Interests vary for wanting a project monitored from sincere desire for reform and improvement of public service, to catching crooks or criminals, to reinforcing one's position in bureaucratic infighting. In getting buy-in from the agencies, it is important to discern "What's in it for them?" and "What is the purpose why I (the monitor) am doing this?"

If the official in behalf of the agency agrees to the monitoring, the agreement is formalized in a MOA signing. Preparing the MOA, submitting it, and waiting for the agency's comments can take time, and this lag time has to be shown in the Monitoring Work Plan. G-Watch usually prepares the MOA and submits it to the agency. The agency's legal department is usually asked to comment by the Department Secretary. The monitor must remember that while monitoring is his principal activity, the project to be monitored and the monitoring itself are just among many projects and activities that the agency is implementing. To hasten the review of the proposed MOA, it is important to follow up and to keep doing so until the MOA is approved and signed.

The MOA is not a magic key that opens the doors to Records Paradise. Filing cabinets do no automatically open when the MOA is signed, and agency personnel do not become friendlier or more accommodating as a result. In many cases, since this MOA is only one among many that the agency has in effect with different parties, its existence is oftentimes not communicated to the field or sub-national offices. Hence, it is important to make field personnel aware of the MOA and its contents. Part of the kit that G-Watch brings with them to the field is a copy of the MOA. Even so, showing the MOA is inadequate. At the field, the purpose of the visit and the monitoring in general has to be explained again to field personnel, bearing in mind the question, "What is in it for them?"

Getting buy-in from agencies is not a one-time process. It continues on even during the agency and public presentation where agencies may continue to be defensive and resist the findings. The monitor must accept that not all of his findings will please everyone, even if framed positively. (If it does, it may mean that she has not done her job well.) Being a monitor requires balancing receptivity, e.g. ability to listen even sympathize with the agency and steadfastness to the purposes of the monitoring and what the data show.

Recruitment and Training of Volunteers

G-Watch usually hired young college graduates to serve as monitors. This was in keeping with the philosophy that monitoring is not the preserve of specialists but an activity that every ordinary citizen can and should do. (In the Textbook Count, the monitors are all volunteers.) Be this as it may, the tool while being simple is not self-explanatory. A brief orientation is still needed. Ideally, the orientation should not last more than half a day or four (4) hours to make it easy for volunteers to attend.

The orientation can proceed as follows:

- Welcome
- Introduction of Participants
- Introduction to the Monitoring
- Orientation Proper
    - Purposes or Objectives of the Monitoring
    - Presentation of the Results of the Rapid Assessment
    - Scale and Scope of the Monitoring
    - Presentation of the Monitoring Procedure or Protocol
    - Presentation of the Monitoring Tool
    - Presentation of the Summary Data Collection Sheet
- Open Forum
- Closing

Before going to the orientation proper, it is important to ask the volunteers pointblank if they have any potential conflict of interest. For example, they may be relatives of the losing bidders and thus, have a potential axe to grind against the current supplier or the agency being monitored. For want of volunteers, G-Watch has yet to screen volunteers during its Textbook Count. But it has proposed to the Department of Education that each individual volunteer (as distinguished from members of organizations volunteering for the monitoring) should fill out a Declaration of Non-Conflict Interest.

The results of the rapid assessment should be shared with the monitors to familiarize them with the item or project to be monitored.

After going through the rapid assessment, the team leader or coordinator should present the coverage and scale of the monitoring and the limitations.

It is best that that during the orientation, the monitors are provided with a Summary Data Collection Sheet (SDCS) to guide them in what documents to ask and look for and what offices to approach. A sample SDCS is provided below. With the exception of infrastructure projects, much of the monitoring will rely on documents, especially if the items to be monitored are consumables. They would have been distributed or used up when the monitor appears on the scene.

If samples of the documents to be collected are available, these should be shown and provided to the monitors for their reference

Summary Data Collection Sheet
Type of Drug:________, ____mg.

	Documents to be Gathered	Data Source or Office to be visited	Persons to be Interviewed
Quantity	e.g, Procurement Plan		
Cost	e.g. Invoice or Delivery Receipts.		
Quality			
Time			

The orientation is also an opportunity to hone the monitors' interviewing and observation skills. The documents are useful but to get to the stories behind the numbers, interviewing is essential. Interviewing is a skill that can be taught and honed by practice.

In the course of monitoring the procurement of vaccines, G-Watch found through interviews that while a vial of vaccine was sufficient for a number of people, it actually served less than this number. Once opened, vaccines could not be stored again. It spoiled almost instantly. At times, vials that were still substantially full were thrown away after injecting only one person. G-Watch had not been monitoring usage, but it was an important finding nonetheless.

THE ACTUAL MONITORING

Actual monitoring entails visiting the field offices to collect data and interview people. It involves visiting the site to observe first-hand how the project is progressing. Before doing so, it is good practice to send the field offices beforehand a letter announcing the monitors' arrival in the area endorsed by an official of that agency. Attached to the letter should be a copy of the Memorandum of Agreement. The letter should politely state the intention and extent of the visit. It should be framed carefully. As much as possible, the word monitoring should be avoided and replaced by a different word, such as "conducting a study or research." Depending on the sensitivity of the monitoring, the coordinator of the team may decide not to mention which documents the monitor would examine and gather. However, under normal circumstances, it is good to inform the field office beforehand what documents would be required so that these can be made available.

Generally, the monitor should bring the following:

- copy of the Memorandum of Agreement with the agency;
- monitoring tool or observation guide;
- Summary Data Collection Sheet (SDCS);
- measuring tape; (depending on the project to be monitored.)
- interview guide;
- tape recorder and blank cassettes or an MP3 player;

- pens and pencils;
- notebook;
- digital still camera; and
- if available, a video camera recorder.

(Note: Some digital camera models have built in video recording capabilities.)

Depending on the good to be monitored, the monitor can omit bringing some of the above items and replace them with others. For example, in inspecting textbooks in the printing plant or in the warehouse, the DepEd provided the monitors with dust masks to mitigate the strong smell of paper and ink. In addition, it was observed that the monitors needed to bring stools and scissors for cutting through the transparent tape on the box and the plastic straps holding the books together.

In the field, before releasing them to their assignments, it is good practice to do a quick refresher on the monitoring protocols including the tools. The monitoring procedure may involve division of labor among the monitors, like for example organizing the volunteers into an assembly line to inspect various categories of defects in textbooks, as G-Watch has proposed to the Department of Education (DepEd). The monitoring procedure or protocol will vary from one good to another.

Documents can be photocopied. If they are voluminous and hence prohibitively expensive for photocopying, a digital camera can be used, as G-Watch researchers did while collecting the prices of items procured by the different agencies for the Price Statbank project.

The analysis of the documents should begin at the field office level. It is not good practice to simply photocopy and starting reading them back in the office. With the modern predominance of print, anything written often is regarded as true by the mere fact that it is preserved in ink and placed on paper. Like any human invention, documents can lie; they can be fabricated. More commonly, the documents have incomplete entries or information. In the Price Statbank project, much of the data gathered could not be used because the unit of measure and specifications of the item purchased were missing in the documents. It was impossible to know if the medicines purchased were in tablet, capsule or in some cases, in syrup form. The strength of the medicine was not indicated. Hence, an outsider could not tell if the capsules were 100, 250 or 500 milligrams or tablets were in 5, 10, 20, or 30 milligrams. It is important to interrogate the documents, interview people to fill in the blanks, and triangulate their contents with the statements of field people.

In interviewing people, be as comprehensive as possible. Never assume. Keep asking, approaching a topic from different angles and framing the same question in as many ways possible. At the beginning or end of the interviews, get the contact details of the person, her office phone or if she is willing, her residence and mobile phone numbers. Some questions on the documents or her statements may pop up during the processing of the results.

Take notes as unobtrusively as possible. Tape recording normally stifles the candor of people. Even if it does not, tape recording is never a substitute for note taking.

Some findings are better seen than described like the wall-less school building that a contractor had abandoned in Leyte monitored by G-Watch in 2000. Take pictures, as they are more powerful than any description.

If a video camera is available, use it. However, with any technology, there are proper and improper ways of using the equipment. With video cameras, editing the clip or film can take some time and requires expert knowledge. Preparing a video documentary even as short as thirty (30) minutes can be time-consuming and tedious, as G-Watch found in 2002 when it produced a video documenting the results of monitoring selected road projects of the DPWH and school building projects of the DepEd.

The experience of G-Watch monitors shows that data can be scattered across several documents. Some of the data are not even processed or consolidated into one document. Instead they are in raw or original form such as handwritten entries in index cards. In these cases, the monitor may have to craft a tool right then and there in the field to supplement the original monitoring tool.

The need for a supplementary tool was demonstrated recently during the inspection of textbooks in warehouses. The textbooks were printed in Bangkok, Thailand and shipped to Manila. DepEd protocol requires that prior to being forwarded to the high schools and district offices, the textbooks had to be inspected for any defects in printing, binding, and packaging. The DepEd has an inspection form for this purpose. However, during the inspection, it was found that this form was useful for recording cumulative or aggregate findings or the findings for the whole monitoring, not findings per box as the textbooks were packaged. (Each box contained 35 textbooks and 1 teacher's manual.) For this purpose, it was recommended that a tally sheet per box or per batch (if the textbooks were monitored during and immediately after printing) should be crafted for on the spot, real-time monitoring of the textbooks.

Monitoring can test the resourcefulness and patience of the researcher. No one likes to be monitored. And following the Heisenberg principle, the mere presence of an observer alters the subjects being observed. Defensiveness, subtle resistance, even hostility are to be expected. Field personnel are apt to think that the central office is sending someone to spy on them, especially if the regional director or provincial officer is at loggerheads with the Secretary or the Undersecretary. In this age of good governance, they would think that the monitoring is part of an effort to ferret out the corrupt.

A good way of minimizing resistance of field people was how the Instructional Materials Council Secretariat (IMCS) framed the participation of Girl and Boy Scouts and other civil society organizations in the Textbook Count project. The IMCS director explained that it was not the district supervisors or property custodians that were being monitored but the suppliers/printers of the textbooks and their forwarders. Payments to the latter would be withheld unless they had satisfactorily performed their obligations as per contract. The monitor can take on a similar tack, accentuating the positive and appealing to the better side of the field personnel. A line to take is that this project is a cooperative endeavor aimed at improving the government's delivery of services. To reduce resistance, the tone of voice, the words spoken, and for that matter, the overall demeanor of the monitor, is crucial.

In 2002, G-Watch monitored drug procurement of several Centers of Health Development (equivalent to regional offices) of the Department of Health (DOH). The G-Watch monitor had problems with one CHD, which did not immediately provide the documents when the monitor showed up. They promised to do so on a later date. That date came and went and still no documents. After repeated calls to the office, only then did they send the documents. However, the documents appeared to have been manufactured. At that time, the director of this CHD was in conflict with the then Secretary of Health. Rumors had it that he was being replaced or transferred but was fighting to retain his post using his political connections.

It may happen that despite all efforts to be diplomatic, field people may continue to resist and withhold documents. In this case, the monitor should think of alternative sources of information such as the Commission on Audit (COA) offices or downstream agencies or offices that received the procured items from the regional office (assuming that the regional office is the unit being monitored.) This is a long shot, especially if the monitors have no MOA with the COA or the sub-field offices, Provincial and Municipal Health Centers in the case of the Centers for Health Development (CHD). However, there is no harm in trying. In fact, it is good practice to visit some of the downstream offices to validate if what the documents are saying is true.

It may happen that field officials would try to pry information from the monitor regarding his or her conclusions or observations. Generally it is prudent to refrain from making any definitive statement until all the data have been processed and analyzed. Everything depends on the receptivity of the inquiring official. The conversation may be an opportunity to clarify unclear matters but the monitor should veer away from controversial or contentious subjects.

BACK TO THE OFFICE: PROCESSING AND ANALYZING THE RESULTS

Back to the office, the work of processing and analyzing the results begin. With the mass of data, it is easy to get overwhelmed. The antidote to this is to recall for what purpose the monitoring is being conducted. If the purpose of the monitoring is to compare planned delivery times, cost, quality, and quantities with the actual, then the processing should focus on time, cost, quality, and quantities. The analysis should revolve around the factors that affect these four parameters. Not all of them are equally important.

As mentioned above, in infrastructure projects, time is crucial as cost, quantity, and quality are affected by delays. In analyzing timeliness of infrastructure projects, G-Watch had to contend with variation or change orders, request for extension due to weather, right of way (ROW) problems, etc. For foreign-assisted projects, delays can be calculated by the amount of commitment fees that the Government of the Philippines has to pay for not moving the money. To drive home the impact of delays and of cost overruns, G-Watch presents this in the form of opportunity cost, e.g. how many more kilometers of road would have been improved or built had the commitment fees or cost overruns not been incurred.

Time is also a factor in the delivery of relief goods to victims of calamities. The beneficiary satisfaction survey elicited this from the victims of calamities themselves. Equally important are the quality and quantity of the relief goods. While quality cannot be directly examined by the monitors, it can be gauged by examining storage places and knowing the source of the relief goods, specifically used clothing, e.g. the Bureau of Customs.

The DSWD has a standard for a pack of relief goods, i.e. what it should contain and in what quantities. However, the transfer from regional to local government units is prone to leakages, elite capture, and diversion for political and clannish reasons. G-Watch monitors found that to maximize limited relief goods and gain political mileage, LGUs resort to repacking and subdividing the relief goods.

Analysis of the factors brings G-Watch monitors face to face with the system and the political realities in the procurement and delivery of public goods and services.

Another way of cutting down the mass of data to size is to use the Pareto principle or the 80-20 principle. G-Watch applied this when it monitored the drug procurement of selected CHDs of the DOH. Faced with tables and tables of drug purchases including prices, suppliers, and modes of procurement, the G-Watch team used the Pareto Principle to zero in on the truly important ones. What are the 20% of the items that drive 80% of the drug purchases of a CHD? The answer was two shortlists of drugs according to volume and total amount purchases. The reason for the two shortlists was that certain drugs were more expensive than others. While the CHD may have purchased large volumes of certain drugs, the prices of these drugs were lower than others. Thus, their impact on the total amount of purchases would not be as significant compared to higher-priced drugs purchased at lower volumes. However, in terms of the number of beneficiaries, higher volume drugs would theoretically serve more patients than those of lower volume.

A powerful way of analyzing is the use of comparison. Going back to the same drug procurement monitoring, after a shortlist of drugs was drawn up using the 80-20 principle, this list was compared with the Philippine Drug Formulary that prioritizes drugs that a Rural Health Unit (RHU) or Center for Health Development (CHD) should purchase and have into Vital, Essential, and Necessary (VEN). Using this legally mandated standard, one can arrive at a profile of drug purchases by the CHD. It can identify which drugs in the shortlist are *not* in the Formulary. The number and amount of drugs purchased that are *not* in the Formulary can mean two things: that reasons other than the legal standard is driving the purchases or that the Formulary itself needs updating to keep pace with the changing disease profile of the locality.

This brings us to another comparison used in the drug procurement monitoring: matching the drug purchases with the morbidity-mortality profile of the locality. This indicates the responsiveness of procurement to the needs of the citizens. One would expect a one-to-one correspondence between the top illnesses and the top drug purchases in monetary terms. But this was not the case. Some of the purchases had been driven by standard, centrally-driven programs implemented in selected regions, such as a child nutrition program. Some of the purchases had been politically-motivated, dictated by the Congressman's wife or the Governor's wife having cancer; hence the emphasis on drug purchases for malignant neoplasms, as cancerous tumors are called.

Yet another way of analyzing the data gathered for the said drug procurement monitoring project was comparing prices of the same drug across different CHDs, the prices of the same drug across different modes of procurement (public bidding, shopping, emergency purchases, etc.), and the prices of the same drug across different suppliers. The last was especially tricky, as some supplied branded drugs while others supplied generic. The findings essentially debunked the notion the public bidding resulted in lower prices.

A variant of the comparative method is benchmarking. Benchmarking compares the performance of a project or the prices of a certain item with a widely-accepted standard or with the same item procured elsewhere or by someone else. An example is public-private sector comparisons. The prices of drugs as procured by a public sector agency can be compared to the prices of the same drugs as procured by a private company or hospital. However, there are plenty caveats in any benchmarking exercise. The volumes must be comparable, or at least not too far apart to control for discounts given to bulk purchases. Wholesale prices cannot be compared to retail prices. In comparing, it is important that bananas are compared with bananas, not to papayas.

In analyzing and presenting figures, G-Watch monitors compute the mean or average of say, the different prices of a particular drug as purchased at different times of the same year or in different years. The mean, however, can be deceptive as a few high prices can pull the mean in the upper direction. Thus, G-Watch monitors are instructed to also compute for the median and identify the mode. The highest and lowest figures were also identified, as well as the deviation of the highest price from the mean and median. Reckoning and presenting these provide the reader of the report a fuller picture.

Since the aim of monitoring is not merely to understand but to be an input to action, analysis of the results should culminate in certain conclusions, and finally, recommendations. So what if the prices in this region are significantly higher than in the neighboring region? Why is it so? Why is it important for the public or the top management of the agency to know this and the plausible reasons behind the difference? The analyses of the data sometimes do not lead to an unequivocal conclusion. What the data can support are different, equally plausible explanations. This was the case when G-Watch monitored the textbook deliveries to district offices in Region three. The data showed that forty percent (40%) of the textbooks that was reported to have been delivered to a certain district was unaccounted for. Based on the figures alone, it could not be ascertained if this were a case of "ghost deliveries" (deliveries that were reported to have happened – and for which the contractor was paid -- but had not) or it was the case of poor record-keeping on the part of the district property custodian or the district supervisor.

More often than not, one can already detect violations of procurement guidelines from the data. This should be flagged in the report and brought to the attention of the agency.

PRESENTING THE RESULTS TO THE AGENCIES

In G-Watch's manner of proceeding, the agency gets a first crack at the results in an exclusive presentation to agency officials. The purpose of this agency presentation is to provide space and time for the agency to examine the findings and to respond. The responses often clarify oddities in the findings and sharpen analyses in the findings.

Before the presentation, extensive preparations have to be done.

The first is the writing of the preliminary report. The report is arranged in the usual format: the first part being the introduction, objectives of the monitoring, the methodology, scope and limitations; the second containing the findings and analyses, conclusions, and recommendations; and the third part consisting of the annexes. For easy reading, an executive summary or abstract is placed at the beginning. Whenever possible, the report should place the findings in tables, matrices, diagrams, charts and other forms of visual representation. The contents in matrices should be succinct, consisting of important phrases or key words and not lengthy paragraphs. Tables/matrices, charts, and diagrams do not stand alone. They require textual explanation before and after: before, to introduce its contents and after, to summarize its contents. The tables, figures, and diagrams require a title and should be consecutively numbered.

The second is designing the Powerpoint or overhead transparency presentation. The Powerpoint or slide presentation is a powerful technology if used properly. A few tips in preparing the Powerpoint Presentation.

The tendency of those using Powerpoint is to simply cut important portions of the written report and paste it on the slide. The presenter then expects the participants to just read the slide. This is inappropriate use of the technology. If the presenter wishes the participants to just read what is on the slide, it is more efficient to simply photocopy the relevant parts of the report and distribute these to the participants so that they can read it at their leisure. With the limited space of a Power Point slide or a transparency, cutting and pasting means reducing the font of the text, thereby making it difficult for those sitting at a distance to read what is flashed on the screen.

The rule of 5s applies to Powerpoint Presentations. A Powerpoint slide should contain no more than five (5) lines and no more than five (5) words per line. The rule of thumb is to use phrases instead of complete sentences. Why 5s? Psychologists have found that the normal human memory can remember no less than three (3) and no more than seven (7) items at a time. Lengthy tables or matrices should be placed on transparencies or distributed in paper.

Another common mistake with Powerpoint presentations is for the presenter to simply read the contents. The reason why the lines of the slides are written in phrases is to prevent the presenter rendering a verbatim rendition of the contents. The presenter should not allow the Powerpoint presentation to substitute for his or her exposition and elaboration. It is false to assume that since they are displayed on the screen for everyone to see the contents are self-explanatory. Slides have to be explained. They also need to be supplemented by the appropriate hand-outs.

Yet another mistake with Powerpoint presentations is to prettify them to the point of distracting the audience from the message or substance of the presentation. However pretty or eye catching, the clip arts and the animation schemes should not supplant the speaker, and more importantly the substance of the presentation.

How should the flow of the Powerpoint presentation go? Should it follow the order of the written report? The order of the presentation is dictated by the audience. Since the initial audience will consist of agency personnel, most likely those in the middle and even upper management, they can be spared the presentation of certain details. Upper management would be interested in the findings, or more accurately, the *implications of the findings to their work*, to the agency's programs and projects, and especially, to its effectiveness and efficiency. The monitors should consider that upper management people have hectic schedules, and they can only spare only so much time. If the flow of the written report is to lay the ground for the conclusions by discussing the problem statement, the methodology, scope and limitations, in the Powerpoint presentation for agency managers, the order is changed. The hypothesis or problem statement is presented first, followed by a concise statement of the findings, and then the recommendations. There is no need to belabor the methodology and the process; they can be explained on demand.

The third is the rehearsal. It is standard operating procedure for G-Watch to conduct at least one rehearsal prior to the agency presentation and another before the public presentation. The rehearsal is a no-holds barred, take no prisoners critique of the presentation. G-Watch invites top officials of the Ateneo de Manila University to the presentation. At one time, a former Secretary of Public Works and Highway (DPWH) attended one such rehearsal. When G-Watch compared the cost of DPWH-constructed with those donated by Federation of Chinese Chambers of Commerce, he pointed out that the latter school buildings were constructed at cost while the DPWH price internalized the contractor's profit margin.

The invitees serve as a mock audience commenting on the clarity of the slides, the logic of the presentation, and the feasibility of the recommendations. The critics suggest ways of communicating controversial or sensitive findings. One useful suggestion that emerged from these rehearsals was to use the passive voice when presenting sensitive findings to blunt their impact on officials that would naturally be put on a spot.

An important lesson that emerged from these rehearsals was the need for proper framing. The way a finding or a conclusion is couched have an effect on how it will be received and more importantly, how it will be resolved. G-Watch constantly emphasizes that its focus is in improving agency systems, processes, procedures, not to conduct a witch hunt or to point accusatory fingers at anyone. In fact, a study has shown that at least 60% of the causes of persistent problems are systemic rather than people in nature. The presenters are trained to avoid emotive or judgmental language. In reckoning the difference between the quantities of the relief goods that were released by the DSWD and the relief goods that were distributed to the calamity victims, the suggestion was to use "unaccounted items" rather than "loss or leakage,: indicating the possibility that the part of the problem may have been poor record-keeping. Besides, the monitors did not have hard evidence that the goods had been diverted by local officials to political allies and political favorites who had not been victims of the typhoon, though rumors abound and off-the record statements that diversion of relief goods is happening from the calamity victims to "political beneficiaries."

Finally, during the rehearsal the monitor is taught how to dress and to stand before the audience.

In dressing, the presenters are discouraged from wearing casual attire or jeans. They are to avoid wearing shirts or dress whose colors are too prominent or loud, e.g. red or all black or all white for example or wear attire that is distracting either because they are unusual or display too much flesh. The attention of the audience should not dwell too much on the presenter and instead focus on what he or she is saying or demonstrating.

The presenters are discouraged from reading from a prepared speech, using the podium or a lectern or standing on the stage. They are to stay at the same level as the audience. They are encouraged to move around but not too frequently or too much that the audience is distracted.

The strong position is to stay to the left of the audience and occasionally move to the center. Lingering to the right of the audience is discouraged.

The microphone should not be placed too close to the mouth of the speaker. Without a microphone, the monitors ought to speak from their stomachs not their throats. Speak with one foot forward. Maintain eye contact with the audience but do not fix your gaze only on a few people or a section of the audience. Do not look above them or at the floor. The voice should be projected such that the farthest person at the back can hear.

If writing on a flipchart, avoid writing all letters in uppercase. Use the sentence case. The letters in uppercase should at least be six (6) inches in height. The letters in lower case around four (4) to six (6) inches. Avoid using green permanent or whiteboard markers. Red markers should be used when emphasizing a critical point. Use black or blue markers.

The presenters are to maintain an open posture. No folding of arms across the chest or upper abdomen. Hands should not be placed inside the trouser pockets. Both hands should not be placed at the back like a soldier standing at ease before a superior officer. Stand straight but not stiff.

PRESENTING THE RESULTS TO THE PUBLIC

After the agency presentation, the penultimate step is the public presentation. But before doing so, some preparations need to be done.

First, the invitation or the program of activities has to be crafted.

Second, a list of invitees has to be drawn up. It has happened in G-Watch monitoring that certain stakeholders object to the invitation of certain people because of past differences or due to ideological leanings. In some instances, G-Watch gave in to these objections. In others, it has proceeded to invite the people anyway. There is no fixed principle on whom to invite. Normally, the immediate stakeholders of the agency like the Red Cross and other organizations engaged in disaster management and relief for the presentation on the monitoring of DSWD's relief goods system. So-called "contested" invitees are treated case to case, usually on the basis of what and if they can contribute – if they are going to be productive rather than belligerent participants. The public presentation is also a problem solving exercise on a larger scale.

The question here is: Should the media be invited?

To invite the media or not is often a decision that has to be made in consultation with the partner agency. The partner agency is normally averse to have negative findings revealed to a larger public, let alone in front of the media. No one likes adverse publicity. The problem when an issue is broadcasted to the general population through print, radio television, or the web, the organizers lose control on how the issue is framed or positioned. In news reports, the background, context, and nuances are often lost. Media has interests which may or may not coincide with the interests or purposes of the monitoring. G-Watch has invited media people in several presentations, and the experience has generally been benign. In one instance, the media came uninvited having chanced upon the public presentation. In other G-Watch activities, the attendance of a high-ranking official was a magnet for the media; in yet another, the staff of the high-ranking official invited the media.

Inviting the media or a high-ranking official has implications on the food that is going to be served. If the public presentation is accompanied by merienda or lunch, it is good practice to order more than the expected number of guests. If a television network is taping the event, the reporter will be accompanied by a cameraman. A high ranking official will bring several bodyguards and aides.

Third, these invitations have to be sent out. The rule of thumb is to invite a certain number of people but expect only about 60% of them attending. To determine exactly the number of people attending (which has a bearing on the food, on the tables, and chairs and the size of the venue), ask the participants to fax a reply slip or call a number. Follow up by telephone those who failed to respond.

Fourth, the Powerpoint presentation has to be revised according to the results of the agency presentation. Normally, an official of the agency is invited to give a response to the findings. However, it would be good to present in the Powerpoint presentation the agency responses adjacent to the findings or immediately after all the findings have been shown.

Fifth, the handouts to the participants have to be prepared. Normally, the kit consists of a paper copy of the Powerpoint presentation, important findings in matrices or diagrams, copies of the relevant laws or executive orders, a sample of the documents gathered. A copy of the final report is normally not part of the kit because of its length and consequently, the expense in reproducing it.

Even before reserving the venue, it is good to test the acoustics, the lighting, and the lay-out. After it has been booked, the monitors should visit the venue prior to the day of the monitoring to arrange the seating. In most G-Watch presentations, the layout usually followed the classroom type with a raised stage in front, a presidential table on the stage, and rows of tables and chairs where the audience sits. In a few G-Watch presentations, the lay-out followed consisted of several round tables. These types of arrangements are not conducive to participation and interaction. Experiment with other arrangements to make the atmosphere less formal and more convivial.

Finally, during the day itself, prior to the presentation, it is good practice to test the equipment. At times, equipment that worked perfectly in other settings suddenly and mysteriously throw tantrums when transferred in another. It is also good practice to run through the Powerpoint presentation one more time and to set it up such that it is ready to be shown once needed. These Powerpoint presentations can be scattered across different computers, flash disks or USB drives. Before the presentation, the monitoring coordinator or the events coordinator should gather them into one, transfer them into the laptop or the desktop to be used during the presentation. It is convenient, not to say economical, to put all the Powerpoint files in one folder and on the desktop of the lap top or desktop.

In presenting to the public as well to the agency, it is recommended that the monitoring team be parsimonious in the number of presenters it deploys. Having too many presenters presenting only a few can be distracting to the audience. Wide variations in the quality of presentation are bound to happen. In the presentation, field the best, most engaging, or charismatic speakers among the team, not exactly the best monitors or writers.

The public presentation including so-called "open space" or the question-and-answer portions should be documented faithfully.

POST-PUBLIC PRESENTATION

After the monitoring, it is time to revise the final report according to the results of the agency and public presentations. Documentation of these two presentations should be annexed to the final report. The organization of the Final Report is basically the same as that presented in the section on Agency Presentation. In the post-public presentation stage, the focus should be on the conclusions, the recommendations, and the next steps. The conclusions would have been affirmed, disputed, or negated during the agency and public presentations. The agency and other stakeholders would have viewed the findings in perspectives different from the monitors. The problem definition would most likely have been altered in the course of the monitoring, analyses of the findings, and presentation of the findings. From the whole process, recommendations would have emerged. These recommendations could involve:

- Amendment of an existing law;

After the 2001 monitoring of school buildings in selected areas in Mindanao, Luzon, and Visayas, the G-Watch team recommended the repeal of the so-called Roxas Law. The Roxas Law granted Congressmen and women the power to decide on the allocation of school buildings in their district. This law turned school buildings into instruments of political patronage or vendetta. It skewed the allocation of school buildings in favor of the bailiwicks of the incumbent, not towards school districts that are in most need of them.

- Questioning of prevailing thought:

The Local Government Code granted Local Government Units and Regional Offices of the Department of Health the power of procurement. However, G-Watch monitoring of drug showed that disparate and fragmented procurement led among others to higher prices, wide variations of prices even within the same locality, and collusion between officials and bidders. Local governments could have saved more money or purchased more if they had pooled their procurement for the same drug. The DOH could have saved more money if the procurement were centralized. However, G-Watch cautioned that pooling was not without its own risks. Deliveries for example could be delayed. Failure in bidding in the Central Office could punish all regions instead of affecting one or a few. Moreover, pooling the procurement raises the stake for bidders and intensifies the temptation to engage in corrupt practices.

- Revision or improvement in processes and procedures.

The recommendation may be in the direction of improving agency processes and procedures. For instance, after observing how inspections of textbooks were done at the warehouse, G-Watch recommended that an assembly line approach be followed to better catch defective books. In an assembly line approach, a group of monitors are tasked to concentrate on inspecting the books on a particular set of attributes, e.g. printing only and not all.

Once the report is finished, copies should be provided to the agency in fulfillment of the Memorandum of Agreement entered into.

THE ETHICS OF MONITORING

Monitoring is more than a technical skill or exercise. It is fraught with ethical issues. This section was reserved for last not because ethics is an afterthought but because it is probably the most important consideration of the monitoring coordinator. Ethical issues in monitoring have to do with behavior towards officials of the agency being monitored like the acceptance of gifts and other favors and disclosure of findings, and conflict of interest issues.

It should be expected that officials of the agencies would try to influence the monitoring to suit their purposes. By itself, this is not evil or ethically questionable. Everyone has an interest, even the monitoring team itself. Attempts to influence may range from providing snacks, lunch or dinner, or a vehicle for the monitor's use, to inviting the monitor out to dinner to discuss the findings. Good sense and discernment is needed to distinguish veiled attempts at bribery from the usual hospitality that Filipinos accord visitors or that field officials are known to treat people from the regional or central office. Use of government vehicles is acceptable, since this was purchased with taxpayers' money. The monitor has to take care that the vehicle, at least from its outward appearance, is properly maintained and not a moving coffin. Snacks, lunch or dinner within a certain price range may also be acceptable. However, dinner at expensive places may be unacceptable. If the monitor cannot wiggle out of the invitation, he can at least pay for the whole dinner (if his budget will allow and if the expenses are still reasonable) or he can volunteer to pay his share.

Another ethical issue has to do with the monitor giving gifts, even money to government officials or employees after they have furnished the necessary documents or accompanied the monitor around. Again the standard here is reasonability, and the monitor should exercise his good judgment. If the gifts are given as tokens of appreciation, not as payment for information or cooperation or service that the bureaucrat or official has to provide the public regardless, it is acceptable. The tokens should also be reasonably priced. The question to ask is: Would this employee still have given me the information or cooperated with me regardless of the gift given afterwards, then probably the token of appreciation is ethically acceptable.

Finally, there is the issue of public disclosure. That public documents, findings about a public good or service have to be disclosed is undisputed. The question concerns the timing and the framing. Prior to the agency presentation, information about the monitoring should never be disclosed unless exceptional circumstances warrant it, such as the monitor was subpoenaed in relation to a court hearing against a public official or the monitoring produced solid evidence of a crime to be committed. After the agency presentation but before the public presentation, this rule also has to be observed. After the public presentation, the results of the monitoring can be disclosed freely. However, here a distinction has to be made among public documents, statements that public officials made on the record, and the written final report of the monitoring. Statements made on the record by public officials and government employees and public documents certainly can be disclosed. However, **the written final report of the monitoring, even while derived from such statements and public documents, is not a public document**, **unless the monitoring was funded by public money**. Depending on the grant agreement with the funding agency, they can be owned by the funding agency itself or by the monitoring unit or its mother organization. It contains conclusions and recommendations that are made by private citizens, albeit for a public purpose. The written final report should not be disclosed without consultation with the government agency with which the monitoring entity entered into a MOA.