# The Philippine National Midterm Report

on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 - Quality Education


DepED MATATAG
Bansang Makabata Batang Makabansa

BAGONG PILIPINAS

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1. Members of the Interagency AdHoc Technical Working Group on the national midterm review of Sustainable Development Goal 4:

    - National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)
    - Commission on Higher Education (CHED)
    - Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)
    - Department of Science and Technology (DOST)
    - Early Childhood Care and Development Council (ECCD)
    - Philippine Commission on Women (PCW)
    - Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)
    - Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)

2. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Philippines
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015, member states of the United Nations (UN), including the Philippines, adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for the people and the planet. Among its seventeen (17) sustainable development goals (SDGs), SDG 4 focuses on Quality Education and seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all.

Accepting the invitation of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Philippines conducted the National Midterm Review and prepared the Midterm Report for SDG 4. The latter documents the Philippine context, the progress made and challenges encountered in achieving the SDG 4 targets and identifies priority actions, especially in the context of learning recovery and education transformation post COVID-19 pandemic, covering the period 2015 to 2022.

The Philippines, after a series of consultations and assessments, committed eight (8) out of ten (10) key targets in ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. To assess the country's progress on the SDGs and to provide a comprehensive evaluation of efforts as well as areas needing more attention, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) Board adopted Board Resolution No. 5, series of 2023 or the Adoption of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) measures and the time distance measures in tracking the sustainable development goals (SDG) progress. This report highlights key trends based on available data on the Philippines' progress in SDG 4, as well as key strategies and challenges of the Philippines in attaining its commitments in providing quality education.

Based on the recently released Pace of Progress Results of the PSA in 2023,[1] the Philippines was able to achieve a 3.4% progress in SDG 4 since 2000. Among the SDG 4 indicators, the Philippines is on track for one (1) indicator, which is the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills. Among its committed targets, it has made significant progress in ensuring that youth and adults have the sufficient knowledge and skills necessary for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. Among the notable developments in Philippine education is the institutionalization of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) to address the learning needs of the population who are not able to finish basic education in the formal school system. Through the partnership of the Department of Education (DepEd) with various organizations, continuous support has also been provided to ensure the availability of learning resources and the development of digital skills among youth and adults. Moreover, although the Philippine education system was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, completion rates from the Elementary up to the Senior High School levels increased in 2021 compared to 2015.[2]

[1] Philippine Statistics Authority, *The Philippine Sustainable Development Goals Pace of Progress Results Based on the SDG Watch on 27 January 2023,* 2023, https://psa.gov.ph/system/files/phdsd/Press%20Release_2022%202nd%20round%20Pace%20of%20Progress_14June2023_1.pdf.
[2] Ibid.

Although numerous advancements have been made in the quality of education in the Philippines, its current status falls behind the target for 2022 to ensure that the Philippines remains on track in the fulfillment of its 2030 targets, based on the PSA Pace of Progress Results 2023.[3] Four (4) indicators are in need of urgent attention, which are 4.1. Effective Learning Outcome, 4.2. Early Childhood Development, 4.6. Adult Literacy & Numeracy, and 4.a. Education Facilities. Considering all current efforts in these indicators, their projected values in 2030 will have large gaps from their targeted values, if no additional efforts are made. One of the primary challenges seen in Philippine education is ensuring equality of its attainment across learners of varying social characteristics. Considering the relatively higher budget allocation of the government in the Philippines, challenges still remain in minimizing the gap in access to education among learners of different sex, geographic location of residence, and family economic status. Alarmingly, the Philippines is projected to regress by 2030 in its inequality indices for education indicators, thus the need to reverse the current trend.

To set the new directions in addressing the basic education challenges and gaps, the MATATAG Education Agenda was launched with four (4) critical components as priorities, supported by 45 specific commitments. Matatag is a Filipino term for resilience/resilient. The agenda will harness the national commitment and sustained efforts from all sectors of society towards improving access, quality, equity, resiliency, and well-being of the Filipino learners.

[3] Philippine Statistics Authority, *The Philippine Sustainable Development Goals Pace of Progress Results Based on the SDG Watch on 27 January 2023,* 2023, https://psa.gov.ph/system/files/phdsd/Press%20Release_2022%202nd%20round%20Pace%20of%20Progress_14June2023_1.pdf.

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A&E Program | : | Accreditation and Equivalency Program |
| ACTRC | : | Assessment, Curriculum and Technology Research Center |
| ALS | : | Alternative Learning System |
| AP | : | Araling Panlipunan |
| BAE | : | Bureau of Alternative Education |
| BARMM | : | Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao |
| BCD | : | Bureau of Curriculum Development |
| BEDP | : | Basic Education Development Plan |
| BE-LCP | : | Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan |
| BLEPT | : | Board Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers |
| BLP | : | Basic Literacy Program |
| BLSS-SHD | : | Bureau of Learners Support Services – School Health Division |
| CBPAV | : | Center-based Program implemented in Alternative Venues |
| CCAM | : | Climate Change Adaptation Mitigation |
| CDT | : | Child Development Teachers |
| CDWs | : | Child Development Workers |
| CHED | : | Commission on Higher Education |
| CSE | : | Comprehensive Sexuality Education |
| CSE-ASRH | : | Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health |
| DBM | : | Department of Budget Management |
| DepEd | : | Department of Education |
| DFAT | : | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade |
| DILG | : | Department of the Interior and Local Governance |
| DOH | : | Department of Health |
| DOST | : | Department of Science and Technology |
| DOST-SEI | : | Department of Science and Technology – Science Education Institute |
| DPWH | : | Department of Public Works and Highways |
| DSWD | : | Department of Social Welfare and Development |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| EBEIS | : | Enhanced Basic Education Information System |
| ECCD | : | Early Childhood Care and Development |
| ECE | : | Early Childhood Education |
| ELLNA | : | Early Language Literacy and Numeracy Assessment |
| ESD | : | Education for Sustainable Development |
| ESP | : | Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao |
| FLEMMS | : | Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey |
| FLO | : | Flexible Learning Options |
| IR 4.0 | : | Fourth Industrial Revolution |
| GAA | : | General Appropriations Act |
| GASTPE | : | Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education |
| GCC | : | Global Citizenship Education Cooperation Centre Philippines |
| GCED | : | Global Citizenship Education |
| GDP | : | Gross Domestic Product |
| GER | : | Gross Enrollment Rate |
| HEIs | : | Higher Education Institutions |
| ICO | : | International Cooperation Office |
| ICT | : | Information and Communications Technology |
| INSET | : | In-Service Training |
| IP | : | Indigenous People |
| IPEd | : | Indigenous Peoples Education |
| IRR | : | Implementing Rules and Regulations |
| JDVP | : | Joint Delivery Voucher Program |
| LAC | : | Learning Action Cell |
| LET | : | Licensure Examination for Teachers |
| LFS | : | Labor Force Survey |
| LGU | : | Local Government Unit |
| LMSP | : | Last Mile Schools Program |
| LUCs | : | Local Universities and Colleges |
| MELCs | : | Most Essential Learning Competencies |
| MEP | : | Madrasah Education Program |
| MG | : | Multigrade Education |
| MTB-MLE | : | Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| NAT | : | National Achievement Test |
| NDHS | : | National Demographic and Health Survey |
| NEAP | : | National Educators Academy of the Philippines |
| NEDA | : | National Economic and Development Authority |
| NER | : | Net Enrollment Rate |
| NSTP | : | National Service Training Program |
| ODA | : | Official Development Assistance |
| 4Ps | : | Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program |
| PDP | : | Philippine Development Plan |
| PISA | : | Programme for International Student Assessment |
| PNU | : | Philippine Normal University |
| POPCOM | : | Commission on Population and Development |
| PPST | : | Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers |
| PQF | : | Philippine Qualifications Framework |
| PRC | : | Professional Regulation Commission |
| PSA | : | Philippine Statistics Authority |
| SEA-PLM | : | Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics |
| SEF | : | Special Education Fund |
| SES | : | Socioeconomic status |
| SNED | : | Special Needs Education |
| SUCs | : | State Universities and Colleges |
| TEC | : | Teacher Education Council |
| TESDA | : | Technical Education and Skills Development Authority |
| TSS | : | Teachers' Salary Subsidy |
| TVIs | : | Technical Vocational Institutes |
| TVET | : | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| UIS | : | UNESCO Institute for Statistics |
| UNDP | : | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNESCAP | : | United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| UNESCO | : | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| WinS TSA | : | Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools Three Star Approach |

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CHAPTER 1

# Socioeconomic Context

## National Overview

Located in Southeast Asia, the Philippines is an archipelago of 7,641 islands[4] with a total land area of 300,000 square kilometers (including inland seas),[5] and is politically subdivided into 17 regions, 81 provinces, 146 cities, 1,488 municipalities, and 42,046 barangays as of June 2022. It is the 13th most populous country in the world and 7th most populous in Asia with a population of 109,035,343 as of May 2020, majority (63.9%) of which are among the working age group (15 to 64 years old). Meanwhile, young dependents (0 to 14 years old) and old dependents (65 years old and above) account for 30.4% and 5.4% of the population, respectively.[6] The Philippines is considered a culturally diverse country, with 8.21 million (7.6%) of the household population classified as Indigenous Peoples belonging to more than 100 ethno-linguistic groups.[7] Further, Ethnologue (2023)[8] records 175 living indigenous languages, making it more linguistically diverse than at least 190 other countries. The World Bank (2023) classifies the Philippines as a lower-middle income country and ranks it as the world's 39th largest economy in 2022, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 404,284.33 million in nominal US dollars (2023) and a GDP per capita of USD 3,498.50.[9] The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development Index 2021 scores the Philippines at 0.699, indicating a medium level of development and ranking 116th out of 191 countries.

### The Philippines envisions itself an advanced, knowledge-based economy in 2040.

The Philippines' long term vision, titled AmBisyon Natin 2040[10] (trans. Our Ambition 2040), represents the collective aspiration of Filipinos that "by 2040, Filipinos will enjoy a strongly rooted, comfortable, and secure life," highlighting the right of children to quality education for them to improve their quality of living. The directions charted by AmBisyon Natin 2040 are expected to be implemented across four (4) administrations, through the Philippines' medium-term development plans starting with the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022. High, sustained, and equitable growth is central to this strategy, anchored on a successful transition to a greener, more technologically advanced economy.

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[4] Philippines, National Mapping and Resource Information Authority, *Administrator Tiangco welcomes, 2017*, https://www.namria.gov.ph/list.php?id=1032&alias=administrator-tiangco-welcomes-2017&Archive=.
[5] Philippines, National Mapping and Resource Information Authority, "*Land Use and Land Classification of the Philippines*," Infomapper: The National Surveys, Mapping, and Resource Information Technology Quarterly 1 no. 2 (December 1991).
[6] Philippine Statistics Authority, *Highlights of the Philippine Population 2020 Census of Population and Housing (2020 CPH)*, 2021, https://psa.gov.ph/content/highlights-philippine-population-2020-census-population-and-housing-2020-cph.
[7] Philippine Statistics Authority, *Ethnicity in the Philippines (2020 Census of Population and Housing)*, 2023, https://www.psa.gov.ph/statistics/population-and-housing/node/1684059978
[8] David Eberhard, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig, eds., *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Twenty-sixth edition (Dallas, Texas: SIL International), 2023, Online version: http://www.ethnologue.com.
[9] World Bank, *Gross domestic product 2022, 2023,* https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/search/dataset/0038130.
[10] Philippines, National Economic Development Authority, *AmbisyonNatin 2040: A Long Term Vision for the Philippines*, 2016, https://2040.neda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2162022_A-Long-Term-Vision-for-the-Philippines.pdf.

**Transformative education reform is essential if the Philippines is to reach its development targets.**

The Philippines has been among the list of world's fastest growing economies in recent years, recording annual GDP growth rates above 6% from 2012-2019. Education reforms such as the expansion of secondary education have played an essential role in this growth trajectory in large part by raising productivity and thus income.[11] However, the COVID-19 pandemic reversed the economic trajectory in the Philippines, and exposed key weaknesses in the Philippine education system that may have persistent negative effects on learners, especially those from the poorest households. If the Philippines is to make up for lost growth from the pandemic and meet its development goals on time, it must implement immediate and wide-ranging reforms in education that prepare learners for the economic and technological transitions underway around the world.

## PHILIPPINE EDUCATION: KEY INSTITUTIONS

**The Philippines provides a strong set of legal-institutional guarantees of its citizens' right to education, ensuring that education issues receive political, fiscal, and administrative priority.** In its 1987 Constitution, Article XIV, Section 11 enshrines "the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels," and requires the State to "take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all." It also stresses the complementarity of public and private education institutions and mandates "the exercise of reasonable supervision and regulation of all educational institutions." Lastly, it requires that education receives the highest "budgetary priority," a provision that has resulted in education agencies and bodies receiving the largest combined share of national budgets annually. The country is also party to several international agreements that protect the right to education, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education (CADE), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, among others.

**The Philippine education system is officially divided into four (4) sectors: Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), Basic Education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and Higher Education.** Mass public education traces its roots to American colonization, starting with the establishment of the Department of Public Instruction in 1901. Since then the education bureaucracy has been continually reorganized, eventually becoming the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports (MECS) - which also held portfolios for the promotion of national culture and sports - in the late 1980s. Following the recommendations of the first Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM) in 1992 to adopt a "trifocal" governance structure, MECS was split into three departments: the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS) for basic education covering

[11] World Bank, *Inequality in the Philippines,* 2020, https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099325011232224571/pdf/P17486101e29310810abaf0e8e336aed85a.pdf.

formal and non-formal education, including culture and sports; the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for TVET, and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for higher education. Following the creation of CHED and TESDA in 1994, DECS was renamed as the Department of Education (DepEd) in 2001.

DepEd, CHED, and TESDA are co-equal Cabinet-level agencies and headed by their own secretaries, directly appointed by the President. The three (3) agencies are represented in the Social Development Committee of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and are members of the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) Task Force. Meanwhile, the ECCD Council is an attached agency of DepEd, and DepEd's secretary serves as the ex-officio Chairperson of the Council's Governing Board. Collaborations across the Cabinet-level education agencies are ad hoc and depend on the urgency of issues.

**The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao hosts its own local education governance bodies.** With the 2018 passage of the Republic Act 11054 or the Bangsamoro Organic Law, which defines education as one of the reserved powers of the government of the newly formed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) established the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE) as the region's governing body for education. The Minister of MBHTE is directly appointed by the Chief Minister from among the region's members of parliament. MBHTE also implements Islamic madaris education as a fifth sector of education. Governance of ECCD in BARMM was likewise transferred from the ECCD Council to that region's Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD), which works with local government units (LGUs) to provide day care services.

**Other stakeholders also hold responsibilities in the education sector.** These include LGUs, the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), the ECCD Council, the Teacher Education Council (TEC), and DepEd's other attached agencies. The education agencies also work with other national government line agencies, such as the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and various ministries in BARMM, among others (*See Chapter 2 for an overview of Philippine government initiatives to meet SDG 4 targets*). Private colleges, universities, and schools; teacher education institutions; academic think tanks; international organizations; civil society organizations; and corporate foundations also play an important role in the planning, implementation, funding, and monitoring of education programs and activities.

**Government expenditure on education as a share of GDP never exceeded 4%.** For 2023, it is forecasted to remain low as the Philippines implements measures to achieve "fiscal consolidation" and reduce government deficits and debt. Furthermore, subdued external demand from advanced economies, which are key buyers of Philippine merchandise exports, due to expected global growth deceleration, may further impact the economic outlook.

# KEY TRENDS AND SOCIETAL CHARACTERISTICS

This section describes important economic, political, and demographic trends in the Philippines relevant to the education system.

**Unusual among neighboring economies, the Philippine economy is services-dominated.** Services accounted for a majority 60% of GDP in 2022, while manufacturing and agriculture, forestry, and fishing took up smaller shares of the economy, at 17.2% and 8.9% in 2022 respectively. Remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) have also long played an important role in individual families and in the national economy. From 2010 to 2022, it accounted for an average of almost 10% of GDP, far outstripping the majority of other Southeast Asian countries, with an average of approximately 1.4% over the same period.[12] [13]

**Structural inequality has fallen but remains high compared to neighboring countries.** The Philippines had a Gini coefficient of 42.3% in 2018 which fell by 2.3% from its inequality level of 44.6% in 2015. However, the Philippines still has the highest inequality among the eight (8) Southeast Asian countries with available data on inequality from 2014 to 2018. Although inequality further fell to 41.2% in 2021, disparity of income is still evident with the pre-tax income of the upper 1% earners accounting to 19.6% of national income, while that of the bottom 50% earners only account for 12.5% of the national income.[14]

Inequities in education, in terms of access and quality, are a major driver of structural inequality in the Philippines. Controlling for other factors, individuals with more years of schooling generally earn more than those with less. Expected returns to post-secondary education are reflected in learners' education preferences; three-quarters of K to 12 graduates surveyed by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies expressed a preference to proceed to higher education, despite DepEd having emphasized that K to 12 provides sufficient skills to seek employment or entrepreneurship opportunities after graduation.[15] Income gaps also exist among post-secondary graduates, with average returns to tertiary education higher among graduates at the top end of the income distribution than at the bottom, and among a number of professional occupations (e.g. medicine, law) compared to others.[16]

Conversely, structural economic inequality results in significant differences between learning outcomes among socioeconomic groups. The circumstances into which learners are born significantly affect whether learners are likely to attend school and do well; children from poorer households are less likely to be enrolled in school, be enrolled in age-appropriate grades, and finish tertiary education.

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[12] World Bank, *Personal remittances, received (% of GDP)*, n.d., https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/.
[13] Data excludes Cambodia due to the high contribution of personal remittances to GDP, especially from 2019 to 2022 which exceeded that of the Philippines. Brunei Darussalam is also not included due to the unavailability of data.
[14] World Inequality Database, *Pre-tax national income* (2022), https://wid.world/.
[15] Aniceto Orbeta, Jr., Marites Lagarto, Ma. Kristina Ortiz, Danica Ortiz and Maropsil Potestad, *Senior High School and the Labor Market: Perspectives of Grade 12 Students and Human Resource Officers*, 2018, https://pidswebs.pids.gov.ph/CDN/PUBLICATIONS/pidsdps1849_rev.pdf.
[16] Melba Tutor, Aniceto Orbeta, Jr., and James Miraflor, *The 4th Philippine Graduate Tracer Study: Examining Higher Education As Pathway To Employment, Citizenship, and Life Satisfaction from the Learner's Perspective* (2019), https://pidswebs.pids.gov.ph/CDN/PUBLICATIONS/pidsdps1926.pdf.

**Persistently low unemployment alongside increasing labor force participation rates.** Since 2021, the employment and labor force participation rates have been increasing. According to the PSA, the employment rate in the Philippines for 2022 is 94.6%, an increase from 92.2% of 2021. In the same period, the labor force employment rate increased from 63.3% to 64.7%. Among the employed, the service sector accounted for the largest share at 59.9%, followed by the agriculture sector at 22.6%, and the industry sector at 18.1%. Additionally, the labor force participation rate also increased to 17.5%.[17]

Another important consideration in the labor situation of the country is Labor Force Participation by gender: 76.2% for males and 55.9% for females. This points to the persistence of traditional gender roles in Philippine society, despite findings that females' education outcomes outperform those males. This indicates that the country is not maximizing the potential of a significant portion of its human resources.

**The labor force in the Philippines is increasingly educated compared to other countries in the region.** According to UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS),[18] the Philippines mean years of schooling was 8.5 in 2017. Then, the school life expectancy in the country from primary to tertiary education is 12.82 (2017), 12.84 (2018), 13.04 (2019), 12.78 (2020).

A 2020 Philippine Institute of Development Studies paper found that key stakeholders remained uncertain about the ability of the basic education system to prepare learners for the labor market.[19] Firms also expressed hesitation in hiring K to 12 graduates, citing unfamiliarity with the senior high school program itself and the lack of exposure to K to 12 graduates. In indicators of possible job-education mismatch, only 70% of graduates thought that their college degree was relevant to their first job, and only 44% believed that their college training (occupational skills) was the main reason for landing their first job.[20]

**Improvements in internal security have significantly reduced disruption risks to education, which now also plays a role in deepening these gains.** Armed conflicts between the Philippine state, and the Moro nationalist and communist rebels and other armed groups have historically caused significant internal displacement of people (IDPs) and disruption to education services. Between 2015 and 2022, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center reported that around 2 million people were internally displaced due to armed conflict and violence, with a plurality of these IDPs originating in the 2017 clash between government forces and pro-Islamic

[17] Philippine Statistics Authority, *Employment Rate in August 2023 was Estimated at 95.6 Percent,* 2023, https://psa.gov.ph/content/employment-rate-august-2023-was-estimated-956-percent.
[18] UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *School life expectancy by level of education*, http://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=3802.
[19] Philippine Institute for Development Studies, *On the Employability of the Senior High School Graduates: Evidence from the Labor Force Survey*, 2020, https://pidswebs.pids.gov.ph/CDN/PUBLICATIONS/pidsdps2040.pdf.
[20] Melba Tutor, Aniceto Orbeta, Jr., and James Miraflor, *The 4th Philippine Graduate Tracer Study: Examining Higher Education As Pathway To Employment, Citizenship, and Life Satisfaction from the Learner's Perspective,* 2019, https://pidswebs.pids.gov.ph/CDN/PUBLICATIONS/pidsdps1926.pdf.

State armed militants in and around Marawi City.[21] Amidst continuing conflict, the Philippine state has made breakthroughs in the Mindanao peace process.

**The creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) has empowered peacebuilding efforts in the Southern Philippines.** Following nearly a decade of negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the largest armed group, the Philippines enacted the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in 2018. The law carved out a new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, to which several local governance functions (including education) were fully devolved for the first time in Philippine history. By providing a framework for peaceful transition, demilitarization, and amnesty, the BOL also enabled the transformation of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front into a nonviolent and mainstream player in national politics. Even as the education system remains responsive to the implications of possible future conflict, it must now also avert these possibilities by performing peacebuilding work in former conflict areas.

**Climate change and the increased occurrence of extreme weather events pose disruption risks and opportunities for green adaptation.** Lying at the junction of several tectonic plate boundaries and in an area of frequent tropical cyclones, the Philippines is disproportionately exposed to natural hazards compared to most other countries. The Global Climate Risk Index 2021 ranked the Philippines 17th most vulnerable country in the world affected by climate change. Internal Displacement Center data shows that 34.6 million Filipinos were displaced from 2015-2022, the majority by typhoons.[22]

Climate change and extreme weather events have caused frequent and debilitating disruptions to the delivery of education services. Data from the Department of Education's (DepEd) Enhanced Basic Education Information System (EBEIS) from school year (SY) 2009-2010 to SY 2017-2018 show that 43,810 of the almost 47,000 public elementary and secondary schools in the country experienced natural hazards at least once in eight (8) years – of these, 39,738 schools had been affected by tropical cyclones; 25,191 had been inundated by floodwaters; and 5,824 had faced coastal area concerns. These hazards pose significant disruptions to education service delivery in the form of damage to infrastructure, school days lost, psychosocial impacts on learners and personnel, and the temporary use of schools as evacuation centers. Urgent action is required to mitigate the impacts that climate change makes on Filipino children's wellbeing, survival and access to services, including education, water and sanitation, nutrition and health.

**The Philippines must also equip its citizens with the necessary skills to adapt to transformative technological change.** To remain competitive in an increasingly digital economy, employers and workers must be able to proficiently use digital technology, handle large volumes of information, and exercise flexibility and creativity. However, the Philippines continues to lag behind its neighbors in the acquisition of these necessary skills as well as the technology for which these skills are

[21] Internal Displacement Center, *Country Profile: Philippines, 2023,* https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/philippines#:~:text=There%2C%20the%20total%20number%20of,were%20displaced%20by%20that%20event.
[22] Ibid.

needed. Philippine firms have been relatively slow to adopt new technologies, with a 2017 International Labour Organization (ILO) survey reporting that only 37% had adopted partially or fully automated processes in the last three fiscal years.[23] This delayed development of a digital economy poses significant social risks. Instead of boosting productivity, digitalization and automation may instead lower it as workers are unable to transition to new jobs given lack of training. A 2019 McKinsey report argues that as many as 6.2 million jobs may be automated in the Philippines.[24] By training new workers and reorienting others towards the use of digital technologies, the education system plays a vital role in maintaining national economic competitiveness and social cohesion through technological change.

The lack of strong digital infrastructure has hampered efforts at ensuring the continuity of education and experimenting with technologically driven learning innovations. Only 53% of Filipinos reported using the Internet in 2021, a much lower rate than its Southeast Asian neighbors.[25] DepEd EBEIS data showed that 18% of public elementary and secondary schools are not connected to the internet. At the country level, the National Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Household Survey found that 6% of households did not have electricity, 53.5% did not have radios, 21.1% did not have TVs, 79.7% did not have computers, and 84.3% did not have access to the internet.[26] At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, several educational institutions attempted to shift towards online learning, only changing course after finding that many learners' households did not have access to the internet or even suitable digital devices.

**Disruptions to the education system caused by COVID-19 must be mitigated and insulated against.** The COVID-19 pandemic brought disruption on a scale never before experienced by the Philippine education system. In late March 2020, schools began to shut down due to the quarantine restrictions imposed by the government. The pandemic also accelerated trends of closures among private education institutions. The shift to distance learning and the uncertainty of the pandemic led to a sharp decline in basic education enrollment. From School Year 2019-2020 to School Year 2020-2021,[27] the total basic education enrollment decreased by 7.23% across all grade levels and ALS. While public school enrollment decreased by only 2%, private school enrollment decreased by 25%.

Chapter 4 of this report provides additional information on the pandemic's effects and measures taken to address them.

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[23] Raymond Gaspar and Nicholas Harris, *The fate of job creation in the Philippines amid the automation revolution: A firm-level analysis,* ADBI Working Paper Series No. 1081 (2020), https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/238438.

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[25] World Bank, *Philippine Digital Economy Report 2020: A Better Normal under COVID-19, Digitalizing the Philippine Economy Now*, 2020, https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/796871601650398190/philippines-digital-economy-report-2020-a-better-normal-under-covid-19-digitalizing-the-philippine-economy-now.

[26] Philippines, Department of Information and Communications Technology, *National Information and Communications Technology Household Survey (NICTHS)* 2019, https://dict.gov.ph/ictstatitics/nicths2019.

[27] Philippines, Department of Education, *Historical Data of Enrollment Including ALS from SY 2016-2017 to SY 2021-2022*, 2022, https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/5-Data-Bits-Enrollment-Data-May.pdf.

CHAPTER 2

# Adaptation and Implementation

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been the blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future, addressing global challenges including poverty, inequality, climate change, education, peace, and justice, and the Philippines affirms its commitment to achieving the SDGs by 2030 and beyond, as outlined in the AmBisyon Natin 2040.

Established through Executive Order No. 5, s. 2016, AmBisyon Natin 2040 aspires for the Philippines to be a prosperous, predominantly middle-class society free from poverty, with citizens who are healthy and have improved life expectancy, can be intellectually capable and innovative, and have confidence in the community they live in. The creation of this long-term vision was through the collective contribution of Filipinos in focus group discussions and national surveys and from this, AmBisyon Natin 2040 identified areas and sectors where efforts should be directed. As a whole, AmBisyon Natin 2040 is a holistic vision that serves as a guidepost of the country's development plans.

One of these plans is the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028 for deep economic and social transformation to reinvigorate job creation and accelerate poverty reduction. Moreover, the PDP is also aligned to the different sector targets outlined in the SDG to guide the different agencies in their respective initiatives. For the education sector, this can be obtained through the improvement of the quality and relevance of education and provide opportunities for lifelong learning and options to obtain micro-credentials.

To further operationalize the PDP, Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01, series of 2018 or the Guidelines on the Localization of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 Results Matrices and the Sustainable Development Goals was set, fortifying the vertical integration of different government agencies in development planning and budgeting as well as formulation of results matrices to ensure that local development plans are aligned with the PDP, and in effect, contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

The Philippine Congress has created dedicated committees for the Sustainable Development Goals. In the House of Representatives, the House Committee on the Sustainable Development Goals was created primarily to support the implementation of SDGs and to track progress towards 2030. The committee has 19 members which conducts regular committee meetings. In March 2023, a legislation titled "An Act Mandating the Annual Conduct of National Voluntary Review of the Philippines' Performance of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and mandating the Secretary of the NEDA to appear annually before the Congress to report the results of said review" was proposed in the House of Representatives.

In the Philippine Senate, the Sub-Committee on SDGs, Innovations, and Futures Thinking was created in 2019 to oversee the country's progress in achieving its commitments to the SDGs by the year 2030. The creation of the sub-committee is key in ensuring consistency of legislation to the SDGs and will be a critical committee in providing legislation supportive of long term planning to achieve AmBisyon Natin 2040. Moreover, the new committee would oblige the Senate to allot the needed time and resources and assess current policies that will impact the future generations.

In December 2019, the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) under the National Economic and Development Authority Board (NEDA Board) approved the creation of Sub-Committee on SDGs (SC-SDGs) during the 177th DBCC meeting, with the following roles and functions:

- Provide support, guidance, and oversight on the integration of the SDGs into the PDP and related sectoral plans;
- Identify and address gaps of current policies and programs needed to drive progress on the SDGs and coordinate with DBM on the funding of these programs;
- Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the programs identified in the SDG Annex in meeting the 2030 targets;
- Propose to Congress and Senate SDG-relevant policies and communicate needed budget for the SDG-related programs and projects; and
- Review SDG-related policy, program, partnerships, and budget recommendations proposed by the TWGs.

The NEDA Board, the government's main decision-making body on major decisions related to government operations, budget, programs and projects including international commitments, is Chaired by the President of the Republic of the Philippines.

Along with the above, to align the institutions towards the pursuit of lifelong learning and quality education, DepEd, TESDA, CHED, PRC and DOLE, established the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) standardized national levels of educational outcomes. This framework facilitates access to qualifications and enables individuals to transition seamlessly between various education and training sectors, as well as between these sectors and the job market. Additionally, it elevates the national qualification standards to align with global qualifications frameworks, promoting the mobility and competitiveness of Filipino learners and workforce.

National government agencies have also taken on the role to ensure that teachers, being the main agents in teaching and learning, uphold and maintain the integrity of the professional standards for teachers and school leaders. The Excellence in Teacher Education Act, a landmark education reform bill, was enacted to strengthen the Teacher Education Council (TEC) and enhance the quality of teachers and school leaders across all career stages.

This chapter further highlights several key policies and legislations from early childhood development until tertiary education which have been promulgated to ensure that the Philippines continuously drives itself to remain in parallel with its priorities and commitments.

## Early Childhood Development

The Republic Act (R.A.) no. 10410 or the Early Years Act recognizes the age from zero (0) to eight (8) years as the first crucial stage of educational development and strengthening the early childhood care and development system.

## Basic Education

The Department of Education, being the leading agency for basic education, issued policies, guidelines, and strategies to achieve Quality Education (SDG 4) as highlighted below. These, together with other national initiatives were implemented to achieve the agency's desired outcomes and contribute to the improved delivery of basic education services.

The 10-Point Agenda 2016-2022 of former Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis-Briones emphasized that the foremost task of the previous administration was to raise the quality of education, thus the vision of Quality, Accessible, Relevant, and Liberating Basic Education for All. Hence, former Secretary Briones urged DepEd officials to support key priority reforms such as: full implementation of K to 12; enrichment of curricula; expansion of alternative learning systems; more school feeding programs; enriched curricular and non-curricular programs; fostering critical thinking; enriching appreciation of culture and arts; and financial management reforms.

Under the same administration, the Department also adopted the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030 (DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2022) as its first long-term plan covering all formal education from Kindergarten to Senior High School, as well as non-formal education through the Alternative Learning System (ALS). The BEDP puts forward four (4) priority development areas: (a) pivoting to quality, ensuring that all learners attain learning standards in every key stage in the K to 12 program; (b) expanding access to education for groups in situations of disadvantage to ensure inclusive and equitable quality service delivery; (c) empowering learners to be resilient and to acquire life skills; and d) strengthening the promotion of the overall well-being of learners in a positive learning environment where learners exercise their rights and experience joy, while being aware of their responsibilities as individuals and as members of society.

Even prior to the aforementioned long-term plans, existing issuances were in place to target the different key results areas of the agency. The Alternative Learning System (ALS) 2.0 Program,[28] in compliance with the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, provides the guidelines to ensure that the implementation of enhanced ALS 2.0 is strategic, efficient, and effectively managed by all governance levels, other ALS program implementers, and stakeholders. Ultimately, ALS provides opportunities for out-of-school youth and adult (OSYA) learners to develop basic and functional literacy skills and to access equivalent pathways to complete basic education.

Access to education, regardless of the level, does not end with the learner's ability to enroll and obtain schooling. It also includes their regular attendance, progression at the right age, and continuous learning and achievement. Henceforth, the national government set up other mechanisms to ensure that learners stay in school and progress in their education. This includes the School-based Feeding Program which primarily aims to curb hunger and nutritional concerns experienced by learners while simultaneously encouraging them to stay in school.

[28] Philippines, Department of Education, DepEd Order No. 19, s. 2019: *Policy Guidelines on the Implementation of Enhanced Alternative Learning System 2.0.*

Apart from this, as poverty or lack of financial capacity remains to be one of the major hindrances to school attendance, the DSWD implemented the **Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)**, a measure to target poverty reduction and improve the health, nutrition, and the education of children aged 0-18. Subsequently, the program should help the country fulfill its commitment to the SDGs in eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, and in achieving universal primary education among others. With the help of DepEd in its implementation, the 4Ps shall positively impact the enrollment and retention of learners in school.

As a strategy to traverse through cultures and contexts, some of the notable policies and programs implemented by DepEd are: **Guidelines on Madrasah Education in the K to 12 Basic Education Program**, to harmonize existing DepEd issuances on Muslim education, with new provisions for more effective and efficient program development; **Mother Tongue-Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)** to contribute to contextualized learning delivery and improved literacy; and the **Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Policy Framework** to operationalize the IPEd Program and uphold Indigenous People (IP) learners' right to education by creating a culturally responsive curriculum through dialogues with IP community members towards an education that promotes their values, knowledge, competencies and cultural heritage.

On a similar note, the **Policy Guidelines on the Provision of Educational Programs and Services for Learners with Disabilities in the K to 12 Basic Education Program** was issued to provide the direction for the Special Needs Education (SNED) Program to ensure the provision of educational services to learners with disabilities in both public and private basic education institutions. Additionally, pursuant to DepEd Order No. 29, s. 2018, the **Multi-Factored Assessment Tool (MFAT)** was put forth to assess Grade 1 students enrolled in regular school and identify Learners with Special Education Needs (LSENs) who may require educational and/or medical services. This policy also provides guidance to teachers in the planning and designing of materials suitable for LSENs. The abovementioned assessment tool covers five (5) domains of learning, namely: (a) Cognitive, (b) Communication, (c) Socio-Emotional, (d) Psycho-Motor, and (e) Daily Living Skills.

DepEd likewise acknowledges the impact of a conducive learning environment to the overall performance of learners. Henceforth, it has established policies such as DepEd Memorandum No. 59, s. 2019, also known as ***"Prioritizing the Development of the Last Mile Schools in 2020-2021: Reaching Out and Closing the Gap,"*** anchored in the Last Mile Schools Program, which has the primary objective to close the educational gap between learners located in Geographically Isolated, Disadvantaged, and Conflict-Affected (GIDCA) regions and their counterparts in urban areas. By means of the Last Mile Schools Program, makeshift classrooms will undergo transformation into standard classrooms and the program will bring in electricity through the installation of solar panels in those areas where electrification has not yet been provided and digitalization through the provision of ICT resources.

The persistent problem of having learners in far-flung areas which are also often conflict-afflicted has inspired projects such as **Project Classhome**, an example of a

Regional Best Practice on SDG localization.[29] Spearheaded by DepEd Region II, Project Classhome was created to address the challenging living conditions of the IPs residing in Zinundungan Valley. These conditions have been exacerbated by over half a century of insurgency, posing a constant threat to their way of life. The primary objective of the initiative is to offer essential services with a focus on education, health, and overall well-being, specifically catering to IP learners in alignment with SDG-4, ensuring that no learner is left behind.

With teaching and learning being at the core of its purpose, DepEd has not only made progress in making education more accessible but it has also institutionalized programs to enrich and achieve the learning competencies needed by the learners. This includes the **Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (ELLN) Program**, and subsequently issuing the **Guidelines on the Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Program: Professional Development Component**, that are geared towards improving the reading and numeracy skills of Kinder to Grade 3 pupils while establishing a sustainable and cost-effective professional development system for teachers through the School – Based Learning Action Cell (LAC). In the same manner, **Hamon: Bawat Bata Bumabasa (3Bs Initiative)** was set up to strengthen the reading proficiency of every learner and nurture a culture of reading, which is a requisite skill in all content areas, through different localized reading programs.

On a broader scale, the quality of learners the country produces is underpinned by the shared responsibility and collective efforts of different government agencies and organizations as part of a nation with the same goals. Likewise, a dynamic relationship between public and private education institutions is key in producing graduates who are competent and productive members of society. Ultimately, these enabling mechanisms such as stakeholder collaboration, development of systems and frameworks, provision of government assistance, and learner and teacher support are imperative to the delivery of quality education services, leading to the overall success of Filipino learners.

The government assistance provided over the years include the **Joint Delivery Voucher Program (JDVP) for Senior High School Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (SHS-TVL) Specializations**, pursuant to DepEd Order No. 6, s. 2023, provided additional safeguards for schools that offer the TVL track to effectively carry out the program. The program aims to empower schools offering the SHS-TVL through tuition fee assistance for public schools that are identified as having inadequate facilities and through partnerships with institutions that possess the necessary resources to carry out the program. In addition, anchored in Republic Act No. 8545, or the **Expanded Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE)**, programs such as the **Educational Service Contracting (ESC)** scheme, a partnership program by the Department of Education (DepEd) together with certified private schools, was employed to decongest overcrowded public junior high schools and make JHS accessible through the provision of financial aid, especially to "poor but deserving" students. In conjunction with this, qualified teachers in ESC-participating junior high schools are also supported through the annual **Teachers' Salary Subsidy (TSS) Programs.**

[29] Philippines, National Economic Development Authority, *Regional Best Practices,* https://sdg.neda.gov.ph/regional-best-practices/.

Additionally, DepEd, DBM, and the Department of the Interior and Local Governance (DILG) jointly issued DO 17, s. 2017 or the revised Guidelines on the use of the Special Education Fund (SEF). The SEF serves as the funding source for addressing the additional annual budgetary requirements of public schools in provinces, cities, or municipalities. This funding is used for the operation and maintenance of these schools. Each province, city, and municipality has its own Local School Board (LSB) responsible for the development, approval, and proper utilization of the SEF Budget.

With SDG 4 highlighting the importance of quality education and the learners' achievement of the core competencies, it also underlines the value of the learners' holistic growth through the development of their non-cognitive or socio-emotional skills. The passage of proposed bills such as House Bill No. 6574, or the proposed Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act will help resolve the shortage of mental health professionals in the basic education system, and properly address the emotional, psychological, and mental health and well-being of both learners and teachers, especially after crises such as a global health pandemic.

## Higher Education and TVET

Expanding the accessibility of education for Filipino learners even further, R.A. 10931, or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act was enacted in 2016, providing free tuition and financial assistance for Filipino students enrolled in undergraduate programs in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs), and state-run Technical-Vocational Institutes (TVIs). Given its name, R.A. 10931 emphasizes the State's promotion of equal opportunity to quality tertiary education both in public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) and recognizes the integral role both private and public educational institutions play in the delivery of quality tertiary education.

Alternatively, technical-vocational schools not run by DepEd and offering formal qualification certificates are governed by TESDA.[30] Established by the Technical Education and Skills Development Act of 1994 (Republic Act 7796), TESDA formulates workforce and skills plans, sets appropriate skills standards and tests, coordinates and monitors workforce policies and programs, and provides policy directions and guidelines for resource allocation for the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions in both the private and public sectors. It also serves other functions such as but not limited to restructuring of efforts to promote and develop a middle-level workforce; development of an accreditation system for institutions involved in technical-vocational human resource development; approval of skills standards and tests; and financing of programs and projects for technical education and skills development

These said laws laid the groundwork for relevant reforms and plans, and allowed more collaboration amongst education stakeholders and other national agencies not only towards accomplishing our national goals, but also in catalyzing and mobilizing the policy framework for the SDGs and pursuing our commitments to the international community.

[30] DepEd also offers technical-vocational programs in its basic education schools; however, unlike TESDA-run courses, these institutions do not award professional skills certifications at this time.

## Education Reforms and the Global Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has tremendously reshaped education across the globe and it has impacted the Philippines in various ways. The pandemic posed challenges to the education sector and further exacerbated the persisting issues in the country's education system however, at the same time, it accelerated reforms that should have been in place prior to the pandemic. Moreover, the country was able to develop innovative ways to cope with the fast changing environment brought by COVID-19. Chapter 4 of this report delves further on the impact of the pandemic in terms of access, learning outcomes, and wellbeing.

In 2021, the **Basic Education – Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP),** a package of basic education interventions, was put forth to respond to the challenges and needs that arose during the pandemic. With the BE-LCP, different learning strategies and modalities were devised: distance learning; blended learning; homeschooling; modular distance learning (MDL); TV-radio based instruction; and online distance learning, to respond to the various local COVID-19 situations.

The health and safety of learners have also been given emphasis through the issuance of **DepEd-DOH Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) No. 1, s. 2021,** or the Operational Guidelines on the Implementation of Limited Face-to-Face Learning Modality, and **Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) No. 01, s. 2022** or the Revised Operational Guidelines on the Implementation of Limited Face-to-Face Learning Modality, which served as the framework for the safe and gradual resumption of face-to-face classes in educational institutions amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Moving forward and working alongside the ongoing efforts, the current Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Z. Duterte presented her Education Agenda during the Basic Education Report 2023, in the name of MATATAG Agenda, which was set out to give DepEd a new direction in resolving the issues basic education continues to face as well as the new challenges brought by the pandemic. With its battlecry **"MATATAG: Bansang Makabata, Batang Makabansa"** (Trans. A nation for the children, children for the nation), the agenda also rallies for sustained efforts from across all sectors of society to contribute to the development of Philippine basic education. As such, in line with the new agenda, the National Learning Recovery Program (NLRP) was adopted to "strengthen learning recovery and continuity, improve learner literacy and numeracy, and accelerate the achievement of education targets." [31]

Overall, the country has evidently made notable strides in providing a more holistic, effective and efficient delivery of education to Filipino learners. The last chapter of this report tackles the ongoing initiatives and upcoming reforms as it strives to fulfill its commitments to both the national and global community.

[31] Philippines, Department of Education, *DepEd Order 13, series 2023 or the Adoption of the National Learning Recovery Program in Department of Education*, 2023.

CHAPTER 3

# Assessment by SDG 4 Targets

The Sustainable Development Goals 2030 was officially adopted in Incheon, South Korea last May 2015 by more than 1,600 participants including over 120 Education Ministers, heads and members of delegation from 160 countries, heads of agencies and officials of multilateral and bilateral organizations and representatives of civil society, the teaching profession, youth and the private sector. The Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 sets out a new vision for education for the next fifteen years. The implementation of SDGs commences on the first day of January 2016 after the decade of MDG.

This section presents the analysis of key trends for each of the 10 SDG 4 targets in the Philippines for the period 2015 to 2030 based on available data from national, regional, and international sources.

## Target 4.1: Primary and Secondary Education

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

**"Only 10% of Filipino students achieve the minimum reading standard expected for the end of primary education."** [32]

- 4.1.1: Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex

**Table 1:** Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex, from 2016 to 2018.

| Targets/Indicators | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4.1.1.1 Proportion of children in grades 2/3 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading, both sexes | .. | .. | 56.0 |
| 4.1.1.1 Proportion of children in grades 2/3 achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics, both sexes | 37.1 | 23.2 | 27.1 |
| 4.1.1.2 Proportion of children at the end of primary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading, both sexes | 40.4 | .. | 17.7 |
| 4.1.1.2 Proportion of children at the end of primary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics, both sexes | 34.8 | .. | 17.6 |

[32] UNICEF, *Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2019 Policy Brief: Early Childhood Education*, 2022.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4.1.1.3 Proportion of children at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading, both sexes | 46.0 | .. | 36.3 |
| 4.1.1.3 Proportion of children at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in mathematics, both sexes | 37.3 | .. | 13.1 |

*Source: PSA SDG Watch November 2023 | Philippine Statistics Authority | Republic of the Philippines (psa.gov.ph) (Accessed on January 2024)*

From the Early Language, Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA) results, the proportion of Grade 3 pupils that attained at least minimum proficiency level in reading is 56% in 2018 while in mathematics, it dropped to 23% in 2017 far from 37% in 2016 for both sexes. However, despite its decrease in 2017, the proportion of grade 3 pupils in obtaining at least minimum proficiency in mathematics, slightly increased to 27% in 2018 respectively but was not able to reach beyond the proportion data in 2016.

Based on the National Achievement Test (NAT) results for Grade 6, the proportion of Grade 6 learners that achieved at least minimum proficiency levels or nearly proficient in reading and numeracy decreased to 18% in 2018 from 40.4% and 34.8% in 2016 for both sexes, respectively. In addition, international assessments such as the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2019 showed that 10% of Filipino students achieve the minimum reading standard and 17% for the minimum mathematical standard expected for the end of primary education, as defined in the SDG 4.[33]

For the NAT of Grade 10, the results showed that in 2018 the proportion of learners that achieved at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics registered at 36% and 13% for both sexes respectively. The results of Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 found that the Philippines scored the lowest in reading and second lowest in mathematics and science among the participating countries.

The system assessments suggest many children lag behind in mastering foundational skills such as basic literacy and numeracy. The latest results from ELLNA in SY 2021-2022 show only 29% and 58% of Grade 3 learners achieved at least the minimum proficiency level in mathematics and reading, respectively. This was a drop from 64% and 42% assessment results in SY 2016-2017. Counting showed the lowest level of proficiency despite it being the most fundamental of the numeracy skills. In terms of mean percentage scores, girls performed better than boys by 4%.

The Philippines' performance in the international large-scale assessments (ISLAs), punctuated by continually poor performance in the national assessment, generated the response of Sulong Edukalidad,[34] which addresses the need for major reforms to be

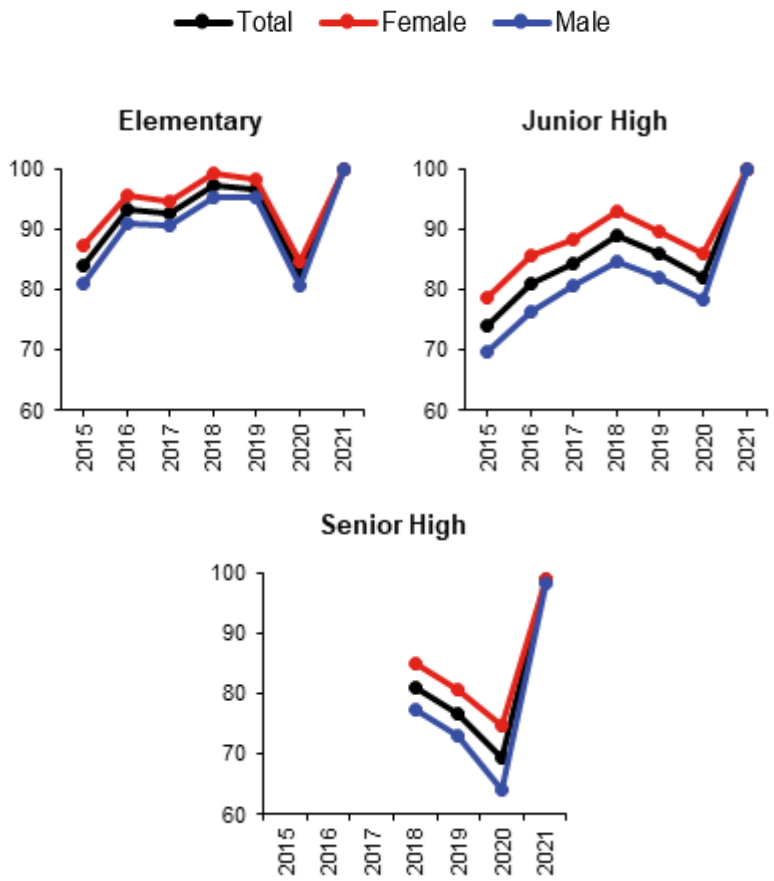
[33] UNICEF, *Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2019 Policy Brief: Early Childhood Education*, 2022.
[34] The *Sulong Edukalidad* is a nationwide initiative formulated by DepEd in 2019 to improve the quality of education. It is composed of four (4) key reform areas: (1) K to 12 Curriculum review and update; (2) Improvement of learning environment (3) Teachers' upskilling and reskilling; and (4) Engagement of stakeholders for support and collaboration.

undertaken to improve the quality of education outcomes. One of the pillars of the Sulong Edukalidad is the review of the K to 12 Curriculum which was fast tracked by the unexpected challenges brought by the COVID-19 Pandemic that enabled DepEd to craft the BE-LCP and identify the MELCs.

"Despite the significant progress in the last years, BARMM is the most underperforming in school completion across the country".

- 4.1.2: Completion rate by level of education (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)

**Figure 1**: Completion rates by sex, 2015-2021




*Note: Computation of completion rates in senior high schools started in 2018. Completion rates are computed based on the UIS methodology where the enrollment for 2 consecutive years is utilized. Source: DepEd- Learner Information System (LIS)*

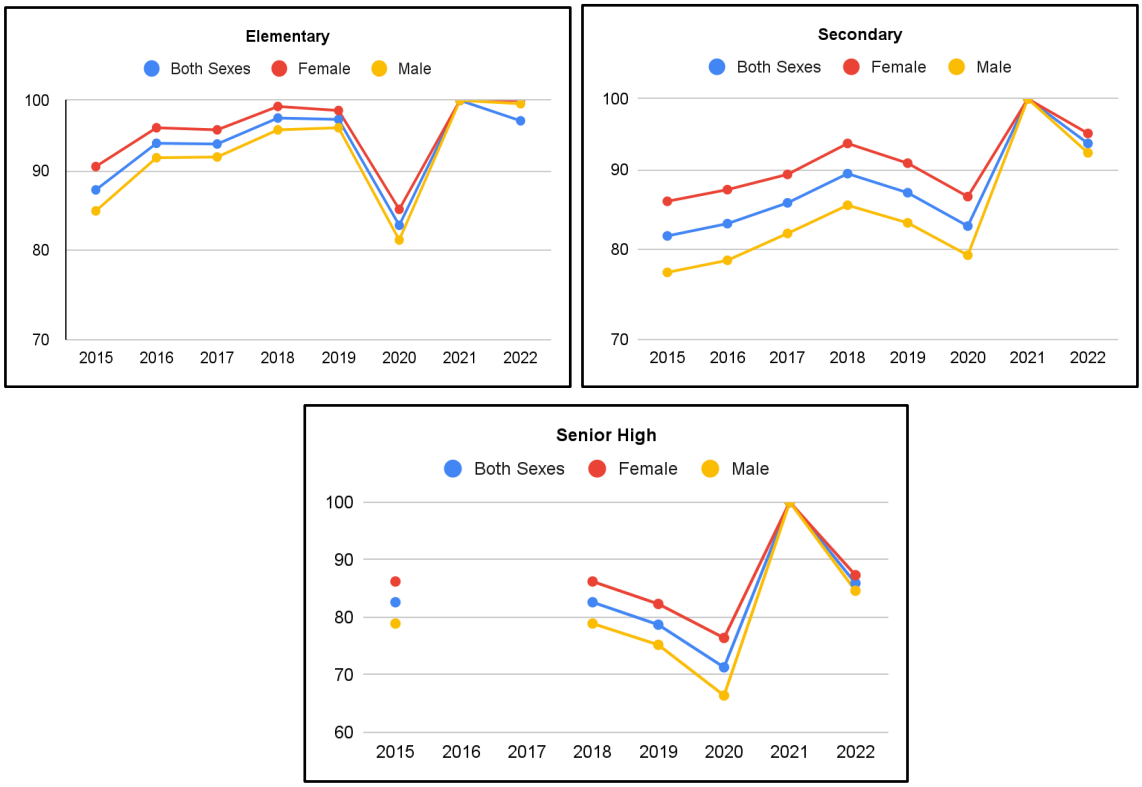
More children, adolescents, and youth have completed elementary school to senior high school. The completion rate in elementary school increased from 84% in 2015 to 100% in 2021. Similarly, the completion rate in junior high school was 74% in 2015, to 100% in 2021. For senior high school, the completion rate was on a decreasing trend between 2018 and 2020, but it stood at 99% in 2021.

Completion rates have been higher for girls than boys in all levels of education until recently (*see Figure 1*). In junior high and senior high schools, girls were almost 10

percentage points more likely to complete education than boys between 2015 and 2020.

In BARMM, the elementary school completion rate was 37% in 2015, but the figure reached 86% in 2021. Despite the significant progress, BARMM is the most underperforming in school completion in the Philippines. Likewise, the completion rate in junior high school was 64% in 2015. It improved to 96% in 2021, but it has the lowest rate across the country. In senior high schools, the completion rate in BARMM was 68% in 2018. The figure stood at 90% in 2021, while the rest of regions had more than 95% of senior high school completion rates.

**Figure 2.** Cohort Survival Rate by Sex, 2015-2022




*Source: Key Basic Education Statistics (BEIS)*

The cohort survival rate for elementary and secondary level increased from year 2015 to 2018. For all levels, including the senior high school, there was a slight decline in 2019 but significantly decreased in 2020 due to the pandemic. However, the cohort of learners in elementary, secondary, and senior high school had remarkable improvement in 2021, but it went down again in the year 2022.

**Figure 3.** Total Number of Balik Aral Learners from SY 2018-2019 to SY 2022-2023

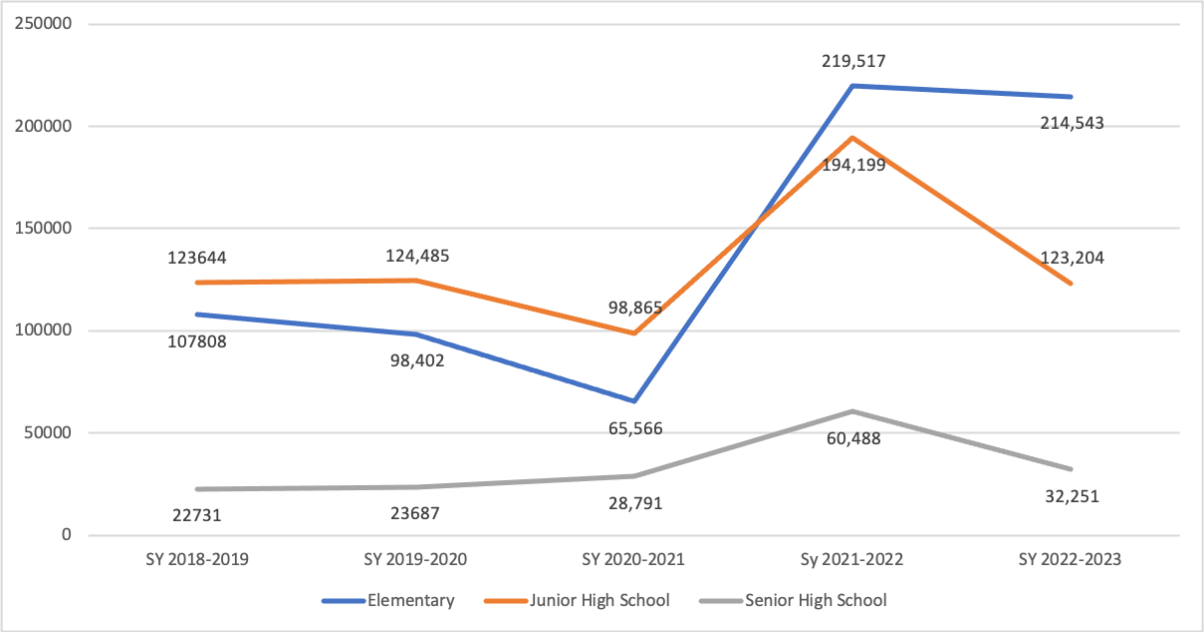



Figure 3 represents the number of Balik Aral Learners from different levels of education (Elementary, Junior High School, and Senior High School) over five school years (SY 2018-2019 to SY 2022-2023). The data indicates some fluctuations in the number of Balik Aral learners across different school years and educational levels. There was a notable drop in elementary school learners from SY 2018-2019 to SY 2020-2021, followed by a sharp increase in SY 2021-2022. Junior high school enrollment remained relatively stable, with minor fluctuations.

The Senior high school saw an increase in enrollment, with the highest number of returning students in SY 2021-2022.

Most of the school heads interviewed during the grassroot consultations shared that in elementary, a high percentage of graduates continue their education and the transition from Grade 6 to JHS is generally positive. For JHS, the majority of the JHS completers proceed to SHS, indicating a smooth transition between the two educational levels. A positive trend of learners continuing their education from JHS to SHS due to factors such as track availability, financial capacity, and local opportunities can influence learners' choices. The specific context may introduce variations in transition patterns, including the culture of work or limited track offerings. For SHS, the majority of SHS completers proceed to college or higher education institutions, indicating a strong inclination towards pursuing further studies. Scholarship opportunities and partnerships with external institutions, career guidance, and individual circumstances influence learners' choices in their post-SHS pathways, play a role in supporting learners' pursuit of higher education.

Interestingly, three out of five ALS learners of the grassroots consultation shared that to continue studying and to finish studies despite being pregnant at an early age, ALS became an option for them. Further, ALS teachers shared that the female learners tend

to prioritize education alongside household chores, enabling them to enroll in the ALS program.

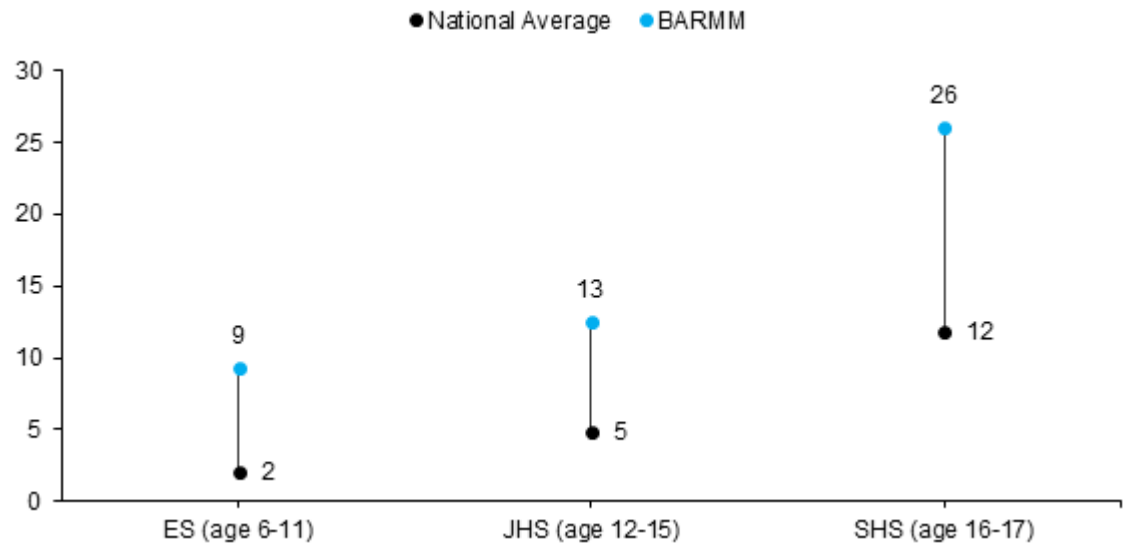
"The out-of-school population is most prominent at senior high school level. About 12% of youth in senior high school-age are out of school."

- 4.1.4 Out-of-school rate (1 year before primary, primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)

In 2019, 5% of school-age children from elementary to senior high school were out of school, which amounted to about 1.2 million children, adolescents, and youth.[35] Prior to the implementation of senior high school, the out-of- school rate of elementary to high school-age children and adolescents was 11% which is equivalent to 904 thousand children and adolescents.[36]

The out-of-school population is most prominent at senior high school level. In 2019, 12% of those aged 16 to 17 did not attend school for reasons such as lack of interest and employment. In general, boys are more likely to drop out than girls – 8% of boys leave senior high school, while the figure is 5% for girls.[37]

**Figure 4:** Out-of-school rates for children, adolescents, and youth in elementary to senior high school ages in national average and BARMM, 2019




*Source: FLEMMS 2019*

In regional comparison, BARMM had the largest share of out-of-school learners (13%) from kindergarten to senior high school in 2019. The out-of-school rate for youth in senior high school in BARMM was 26% (*see Figure 4*). Even at elementary and junior high school levels, the rates are 9% and 13%, respectively. On the contrary, the smallest

[35] Philippine Statistics Authority, *Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) 2019*, https://psada.psa.gov.ph/catalog/FLEMMS/about.
[36] Philippine Statistics Authority, *Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) 2013*, https://psada.psa.gov.ph/catalog/FLEMMS/about.
[37] Philippines, Department of Education, Data for 2020

out-of-school rate was seen in Region XIII-CARAGA where only 2% of children from elementary to senior high school were out of school.

In response to the learning needs of out-of-school learners, DepEd offers ALS to those who were not able to begin or finish basic education in the formal school system. It is a parallel learning system that provides opportunities for out-of-school youth and adult learners to develop basic and functional literacy skills and to access equivalent pathways to complete basic education. In School Year 2022-2023, 640,448 out-of-school learners studied in the ALS program under the Basic Literacy Program (BLP) and Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Program.

ALS was institutionalized through Republic Act No. 115104 in 2020 to strengthen and expand the program to provide increased opportunities for out-of-school children in special cases and adult learners throughout the country. Under this law, the Bureau of Alternative Education (BAE) also was established and mandated that it shall serve as the focal office for the policy formulation, curriculum development, learning program delivery, and learning materials development for the ALS program. Furthermore, the law vested that BAE shall establish quality assurance and support systems and undertake regular learner assessment activities.

As shared by the ALS District Coordinators, most LGUs have a high enrollment rate for their ALS program. The variety of their enrollees include learners from within and outside their locality. There are also more male enrollees in ALS because they are the ones who often help their families work by farming or fishing; they prefer shorter school years in comparison to the number of years to be rendered in formal education. On the other hand, one LGU shared that they have difficulty recruiting and reaching the quota of 75 learners per district because potential learners are no longer interested in going back to studying and are either working or attending to the needs of their own family. With that, there is often a fluctuation in enrollment rate for ALS learners.

Moreover, as part of the yearly activities to encourage and reach out-of-school learners, DepEd conducts child mapping in communities. This aims to locate, identify, and register them during the early registration and return to the school system. Furthermore, DepEd Order No. 23, s. 2022 reiterates this activity of locating out-of-school learners and those with disabilities to increase their full participation and inclusion of all learners in schools.

"The percentage of overage learners for primary and lower secondary education decreased in 2021."

- 4.1.5: Percentage of children over-age for grade (primary education, lower secondary education)

When children start school late or repeat the same grade, they will be over-age for a grade level. Overage children are considered at risk of dropping out of schools. The share of overage children has dropped in elementary and junior high schools in the last few years. The percentage of overage children decreased from 14% in 2016 to 7% in

2021. Similarly, while 23% of children in junior high school were overage in 2016, it decreased to 14% in 2021.

"Various national and international learning assessments are administered by DepEd in Grade 3; at the end of primary education; and at the end of lower secondary education."

- 4.1.6: Administration of a nationally representative learning assessment (a) in Grade 2 or 3; (b) at the end of primary education; and (c) at the end of lower secondary education

DepEd undertakes large-scale national or international assessments at different grade levels to measure student learning outcomes. In early grade, the Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA) test is administered to all Grade 3 learners. At the end of primary education, the National Achievement Test (NAT) is administered in Grade 6 to determine if learners are meeting the learning standards. Moreover, the Philippines participated in the SEA-PLM in 2019 to measure the learning outcomes of Grade 5 students in reading, writing, and mathematics as well as perception in global citizenship. At the end of lower secondary education, the NAT is also administered on Grade 10 students. The Philippines took part in the PISA in 2018 and assessed 15-year-old students' reading, mathematics, and science.

"The Philippines implements 13 years of free compulsory primary and secondary education"

- 4.1.7: Number of years of (a) free and (b) compulsory primary and secondary education guaranteed in legal frameworks

The Philippines implements 13 years of compulsory education, consisting of 1 year of kindergarten, 6 years of elementary school (Grade 1 to 6), 4 years of junior high school (Grade 7 to 10), and 2 years of senior high school (Grade 11 to 12), since the implementation of the K to 12 Program in 2013. It offers free public education at all levels as well as the ALS for out-of-school youth and adult learners.

In the grassroot consultation conducted, parents recognize the financial relief and benefits that free education gives to their children. They also appreciate the effectiveness of public school education despite resource limitations, and acknowledge the challenges that still exist, such as lack of facilities and transportation. Overall, they highlight the positive impact of free education on children's opportunities, holistic development, and the empowerment of marginalized communities, particularly Indigenous Peoples. The ALS program specifically benefits IPs and marginalized communities, offering them a chance to pursue education.

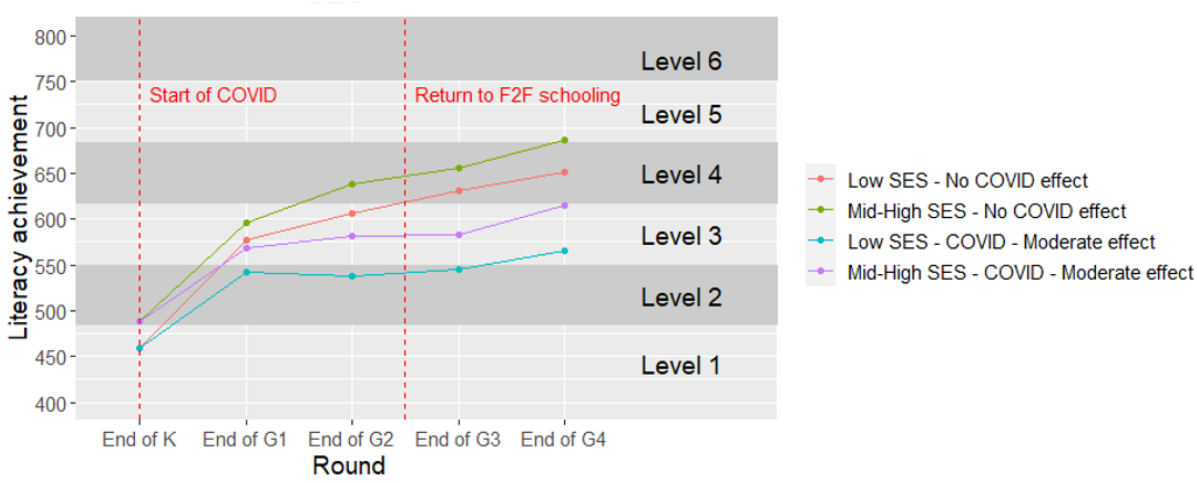
## Key Challenges

While the Philippines has embarked on reforms in basic education since 2013, there is an alarming trend of low-quality learning. The findings of the recent national, regional, and international learning assessments suggest that the country faces a learning crisis with a large proportion of children and adolescents not acquiring foundational skills.

The learning crisis in the Philippines has deepened during the long closure of in-person classes due to COVID-19 lockdowns. Schools were closed from March to October 2020 without any type of formal learning, and education was delivered entirely on distance learning modalities from October 2020 to November 2021, during which many children struggled to keep up with their education.

The long closure of in-person classes during the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the learning crisis. The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), supported by UNICEF and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), conducted a predictive modeling study to investigate the likely impact of COVID-19 on the learning outcomes of students.

**Figure 5**: Projection of literacy achievement trajectory by socioeconomic status




*Source: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on learning: predictive study, 2023*

The findings suggest that there is a strong negative effect of COVID-19 on children with low-socioeconomic status (SES) (*see Figure 5*). It is estimated that low-SES children grew very little in literacy between Grade 1 and Grade 4 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Between Grade 1 and Grade 2, they lost literacy skills, while mid-high-SES children increased their skills.

A study was conducted by DepEd, in collaboration with Assessment, Curriculum and Technology Resource Center (ACTRC), to determine the extent of learning loss during the first year of implementation of BE-LCP covering two (2) exits: Grades 6 and 10 with focus on 21st century skills. Comparing the result to SY 2017 national assessment, the findings show that there is a significant learning loss detected in the areas of Problem Solving and Critical Thinking in Grade 6, and none on Information Literacy. In contrast,

a significant gain in average scores in Critical Thinking was observed in Grade 10 learners. As of date, the full report is being finalized by DepEd.

Mitigating the learning crisis in the Philippines is an urgent undertaking. It is estimated that Filipino learners lost 61% of the years of schooling a child is expected to have by age 18,[38] which results in a 3.9% drop in average annual earnings. The projection also shows that the Philippines risks losing US$219 billion over the next 40 years due to forgone wages and productivity during the long closure of in-person classes. Without deliberate measures, the learning crisis threatens the country's efforts in building human capital and undermines its long-term productivity and competitiveness.

Similarly, about 1.2 million children and adolescents are out of school, which amounts to 5% of school-age learners from elementary to senior high school. Adolescents who are out of school and lack foundational literacy and numeracy face difficulty in achieving learning objectives at their respective grade levels and would later face more challenges in transitioning to higher levels of education and employment.

As shared by school heads during the grassroot consultation, factors such as family problems, financial constraints, and individual circumstances may influence some students' decisions not to pursue JHS. In some specific contexts, there may be records of students who do not continue to SHS, potentially influenced by cultural factors or opportunities for work after completing Grade 10. Limited track offerings in nearby schools can affect learners' decisions, with some needing to travel to the city to pursue their desired track. Generally, challenges in maintaining learners' enrollment and attendance in schools are migration, absenteeism, teenage pregnancy, and need to work.

## Strategies

Addressing learning losses will be committed under "Reduce Vulnerability and Mitigate Scarring from the COVID-19 Pandemic" in the 8-Point Agenda of the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028. The government of the Philippines will focus on improving foundational skills to address learning gaps arising from the pandemic in the next development plan.

Furthermore, the Philippines affirmed its commitment to making the education system fully recover from the pandemic and preparing learners for the future in the Transforming Education Summit in 2022. In this endeavor, the government recognized the urgency of learners fully developing their foundational skills and recovering the learning they have lost, and will exert targeted effort to ensure inclusion and equity for the vulnerable and marginalized children and adolescents. The government also intends to engage local and global communities to invest more in education to meet this commitment.

[38] Asian Development Bank, *Learning and Earning Losses from COVID-19 School Closures in Developing Asia: Special Topic of the Asian Development Outlook 2021*, 2021.

The MATATAG Agenda, which sets the new direction of the agency and stakeholders in resolving basic education challenges launched on 30 January 2023, explicitly vows to review the curriculum to strengthen the literacy and numeracy programs and reduce the number of learning areas to focus on foundational skills. To translate this into reality, DepEd crafted the National Learning Recovery Plan that has sub-programs namely:

- National Learning Camp
- National Reading Program
- National Mathematics Program
- National Science and Technology Program
- Other programs implemented by the Central Office and field offices that support learning recovery.

Moreover, the ongoing K to 12 Curriculum review making has been undertaken by the current administration. Public review of the kindergarten to Grade 10 revised curriculum was also conducted by DepEd to decongest the curriculum. The curriculum reforms, according to the teachers who participated in the grassroot consultation, should include addressing concerns related to curriculum congestion, language transition, mastery of competencies, prioritization of subjects, and addressing learning disruptions. For some ALS Teachers, curriculum reform includes the curriculum alignment in terms of what the ALS learners should learn versus what should be taught (e.g., learners also need competencies and practical skills that are applicable in real life, and not just those that can be learned from modules/textbooks).

It is also cited in the MATATAG Agenda that it is a priority to provide education to children and youth in disadvantage as well as strengthen inclusive education programs such as ALS, the Last Mile schools, and programs for IP learners and learners with disabilities. To encourage them to be in the school system, it is recommended that mapping activities for out-of-school children and adolescents should be intensified in communities to increase their participation as well as provide immediate interventions to learners at risk of dropping out.

In support thereof, results of the grassroot consultation indicate that schools provide various support programs, including ALS, Saturday classes, and Alternative Delivery Modes (ADM), to cater to the diverse needs of learners and ensure educational opportunities for all. To address challenges on learners' enrollment and attendance, schools implement interventions such as home visitations and flexible learning options to address these challenges. Efforts to support at-risk students and promote the importance of education are crucial in ensuring the continuous enrollment and retention of learners in schools.

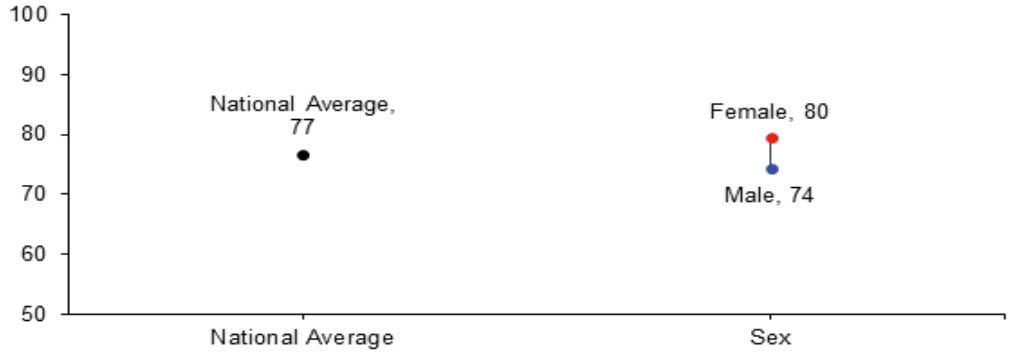
## Target 4.2: Early Childhood Education

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

**"77% of children aged 24-59 months were developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being."**

- 4.2.1: Proportion of children aged 24-59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex

**Figure 6:** Percentage of children aged 24–59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning, and psychosocial well-being by sex, 2022




*Source: Adapted from NDHS 2022*

According to Early Childhood Development Index,[39] 77% of children aged 24-59 months were developmentally on track in health, learning, and psychosocial well-being in 2022 (*see Figure 6*).[40] There is a gender disparity in favor of girls - 80% of girls and 74% of boys were developmentally on track. Further analysis with children's other characteristics is available in Target 4.5.

**"Children aged 5 in BARMM had the lowest participation rate in an organized learning program in early childhood education before entering primary education."**

- 4.2.2: Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex

As reported by the PSA,[41] the participation rate of girls aged 5 in an organized learning has reached 78% in 2015 and 2022 which indicates that the participation rate of the girls has been retained. Meanwhile, boys entered schooling decreased to 74% in 2022

[39] According to the 2022 Philippine National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) of the PSA, Early Childhood Development Index comprises 20 items organized according to the three general domains consisting of subdomains, namely: (1) Health subdomain ( gross motor development, fine motor development, and self-care), (2) Learning subdomains (expressive language, literacy, numeracy, prewriting, and executive functioning) and (3) Psychosocial well-being subdomains (emotional skills, social skills, internalizing behavior, and externalizing behavior). It was part of the 2022 Philippine National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS)

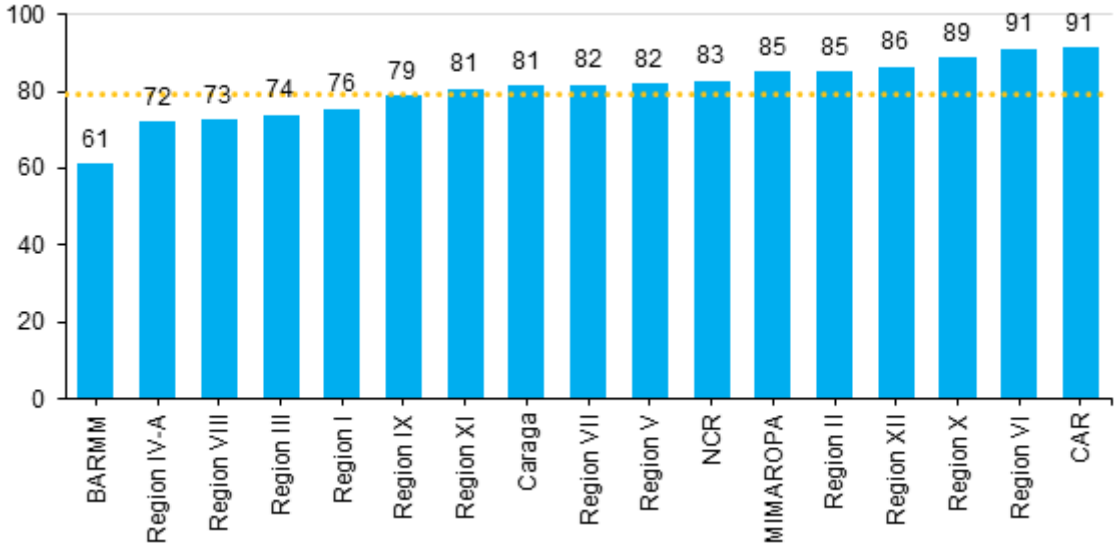
[40] Philippine Statistics Authority, *2022 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS)*, 2022.

[41] Philippine Statistics Authority, *PSA SDG Watch November 2023*, 2023.

from 77% participation rate in 2015. Among all the regions, the participation rate in organized learning is very high for regions such as CAR (91%) and Region VI (91%). On the contrary, regions such as BARMM (61%) and Region IV-A (72%) have a low participation rate (*see Figure 7*).

With the current status of the participation rate of children in kindergarten, early childhood development is one of the targets that the Philippines will need the most effort to reach its committed target by 2030, with an estimated gap of 89.9 points from its projected value in 2030. [42]

**Figure 7:** Percentage of children aged 5 participating in organized learning in early childhood education before entering primary education by region, 2019




*Note: 5-year-old children attending elementary school are excluded from the computation. Participation rates do not disaggregate early childhood education between pre-school and kindergarten. Source: Adopted from FLEMMS 2019*

"21 percentage points of children in kindergarten were overage or underage in 2022."

- 4.2.4: Net early childhood education enrollment ratio in (a) pre-primary education and (b) early childhood educational development

The net enrollment rate (NER) for kindergarten stood at 76% in 2022, an increase from 72% in 2021. However, the figure has fluctuated over the last few years. In 2015, NER was 77%, but it decreased to 66% in 2016. In 2017, it reached 84% but dropped to less than 80% in 2018 to 2020.

Increased GER for kindergarten in SY 2017-2018 and SY 2018-2019 are effects of the policy changes stated in DepEd Order No. 20, s. 2018 (Amendment to DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016) which provides a transitory provision allowing school-aged children that will turn 5 years old within the school year are eligible for enrollment in

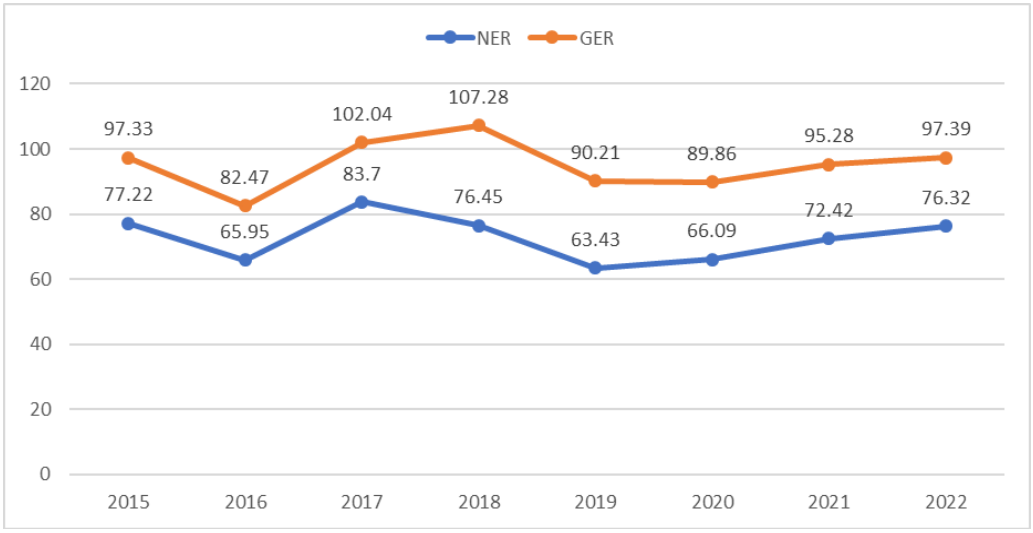
[42] Philippine Statistics Authority, *The Philippines Sustainable Goals Pace of Progress Results*, 2023, https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/infographics/2022%20SDG%20Pace%20of%20Progress%20Infographics_2nd%20round.pdf.

kindergarten. However, starting School Year 2019- 2020, DepEd returned to the strict implementation of the cut-off age in the Omnibus Policy on Kindergarten Education (DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2016) and applied the adjustable cut-offs depending on the start of school calendars of the schools. Since the School Year in 2021 started in August, kindergarten enrollment in public schools significantly increased because those children that turned 5 years old on or before October 31 are qualified for enrollment in kindergarten.

The disparity in kindergarten enrollment by gender has been small, slightly in favor of boys. In 2015, the GER for kindergarten was 97% for girls and 98% for boys. In 2021, the rate was 95% for girls and 96% for boys.

There are regions that perform lower than the national average in kindergarten enrollment. In 2021, 12 out of 17 regions had lower GER than the national average. CAR (79%), Region I (83%), and NCR (85%) had the lowest GER.

**Figure 8:** Gross enrollment ratio and net enrollment rates in kindergarten, 2015-2022




*Note: Computation of GER and NER is based on the UIS methodology. The age qualification of kindergarten is based on the cut-off age of 5 years old by October 31 which excludes children turning 5 years old between November 01 to December 31. Source: DepEd-LIS*

The difference between GER and NER indicates the percentage of overaged and underaged learners (*see Figure 8*). In 2022, twenty-one (21) percentage points of children in kindergarten were overage or underage.

For pre-school education for 3-to 4-year-old children, only 28.10% of children in these ages were attending early childhood education, whether kindergarten or pre-school in school year 2021-2022.[43] In BARMM, the figure was only 11%. The evidence suggests that Grade 1 students who attended an early childhood education program for two years or more are slightly at an advantage in terms of school readiness, entry at the

[43] Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD)

right primary school starting age, and grade progression.[44] This implies that the expansion of quality pre-school education is imperative.

"One (1) year of kindergarten as compulsory education for all 5-year-old children in the Philippines per Kindergarten Act of 2012."

- 4.2.5: Number of years of (a) free and (b) compulsory pre-primary education guaranteed in legal frameworks

The Philippines supports one (1) year of kindergarten as compulsory education for all 5-year-old children as indicated in the Kindergarten Education Act of 2012. In the Philippines, pre-school education for 3-to 4-year-old children is not compulsory. It is a devolved service to local government units, and the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Council coordinates the various ECCD programs nationwide.

## Key Challenges

The evidence suggests that early childhood education has a great potential in ensuring Filipino children's participation and learning in later years as well as in reducing the achievement gaps by helping the most vulnerable children keep up with their peers.[45]

While the Philippines stipulates one year of kindergarten as compulsory education for all 5-year-old children, 72% of 5-year-old children were enrolled in kindergarten in 2021. Research finds that children from families in a low SES and public schools are at a relative disadvantage in accessing early childhood education.[46] In this sense, it is critical to increase participation in kindergarten so that all children are physically, socio-emotionally, and intellectually prepared for elementary school.

Moreover, 23% of children in kindergarten were overage or underage in 2021, possibly due to late entrance or repeating. As starting education at the right age is a head start in learning and predicts higher success in school, the share of overage or underage children needs to decline.

Furthermore, only 28.10% of children aged 3 and 4 were attending early childhood education. The attendance remains low for children in this age group because local government units are not mandated to stipulate pre-school education for all 3-4-year-old children.

## Strategies

To achieve universal kindergarten, DepEd shall take a proactive approach to enhancing education policies and strategies by revisiting and overseeing the policy on cut-off age and enrollment deadlines that is crucial in ensuring that all children have equal access to education and are adequately prepared for the primary grades. Setting the

[44] UNICEF, *Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2019 Policy Brief: Early Childhood Education*, 2022.
[45] UNICEF, *Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2019 Policy Brief: Early Childhood Education*, 2022.
[46] Ibid.

appropriate cut-off age for enrollment is essential because it can impact the child's readiness to learn and succeed in school. By evaluating and adjusting this age, DepEd can ensure that children start school at the right development stage, which can positively impact their education journey. Additionally, focusing on early reading and foundational skills is a fundamental aspect of a child's educational development. Research has shown that early literacy and numeracy skills play a crucial role in a child's overall academic performance and future success.

As mentioned in the BEDP 2030, the DepEd Central Office shall provide training and support to the Regional and Division Offices to enhance their capabilities in quality assurance for both public and private kindergarten programs, including those run by faith-based organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Additionally, there's a focus on mapping 5-year-old children, to better understand the target population for kindergarten enrollment. Finally, there's a goal to advocate for universal kindergarten access within a five-year timeframe.

It is addressed in the National ECCD Strategic Plan 2019-2030 that there should be targeted interventions to increase access to quality early learning programs for young children from disadvantaged households and communities. To achieve this, parents and caregivers from low-SES families should be capacitated in their responsibilities to send their children to early childhood education. Moreover, it is encouraged to review the existing laws and policies that may fall short of being equitable in resource allocation. Furthermore, in areas where it is difficult to reach public schools, partnerships with non-governmental service providers may play a crucial role in ensuring access to kindergarten. In addition, alternative kindergarten models and catch-up programs may supplement the access in this regard.

Parents, during the grassroot consultation, shared that the Day Care Center prepared their children to enter Kindergarten and adjust socially. As one parent highlighted, "Day Care Center develops a child's skills, as the learners are trained to write, to familiarize the alphabet, to count, and to perform simple routines and practices appropriate to their tender age."

Interventions should also be provided to support school readiness of young children with developmental delays and disabilities as well as their families, and their schools. Moreover, it is encouraged to further strengthen data collection at the school level to identify the profile of children who are not attending kindergarten and the barriers they are facing in accessing the services.

Increasing the provision of quality early childhood education programs requires large investments, including funding for infrastructure and capacity building for teachers as well as support for parents and caregivers. To maximize the long-term benefits of early childhood education, it is encouraged to allocate at least 10% of domestic education budgets to early childhood education.[47]

[47] UNICEF, *Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2019 Policy Brief: Early Childhood Education*, 2022.

As shared during the grassroot consultation, at the LGU level, various initiatives to support pre-primary education are also conducted. These include the construction or repairs of daycare centers, provision of equipment and materials, and health-related efforts such feeding programs, giving out of food packs, and vaccination programs. In some LGUs, they provide honorarium to daycare teachers through the Barangay Municipal Office and through additional compensation through the PTA's help. While in another LGU, day care workers are given P3,000 each month. Some LGUs assist in the professional development of the teachers through the provision of seminars and training. These kinds of support should be continued and enhanced to make pre-primary education more accessible in the communities.

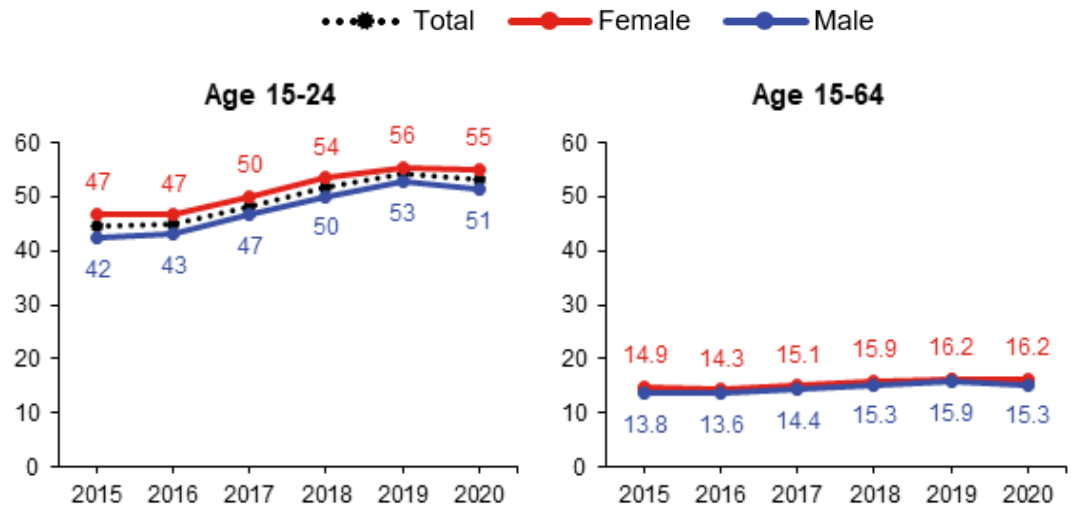
## Target 4.3: TVET and Higher Education

By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

"The youth population are more likely to participate in formal or non-formal education and training than the adult population."

- 4.3.1: Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

**Figure 9:** Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training by sex, 2015-2020




*Source: UIS data center, accessed in May 2023*

In 2020, according to the latest available data, 53% of youth aged 15 to 24 participated in formal or non-formal education and training. The figure increased from 45% in 2015. Women are slightly more likely to participate than men (*see Figure 9*). In 2020, 55% of young women took part in formal or non-formal education and training, compared to 51% of young men.

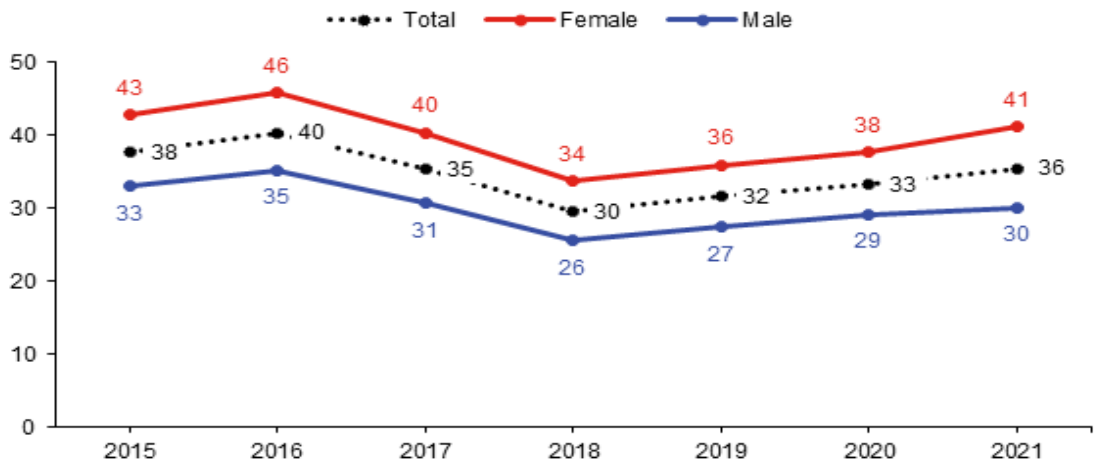
The participation rate is smaller for the adult population. About 16% of adults aged 15 to 64 took part in formal or non-formal education and training. Women and men have

been almost equally attending formal or non-formal education and training since 2015 in this age group.

"While GER for kindergarten to senior high school exceeded 90%, GER for tertiary education was 36% with a gender disparity in favor of women."

- 4.3.2: Gross enrollment rate for tertiary education by sex

**Figure 10:** Gross enrollment rate ratio for tertiary education by sex, 2015-2021

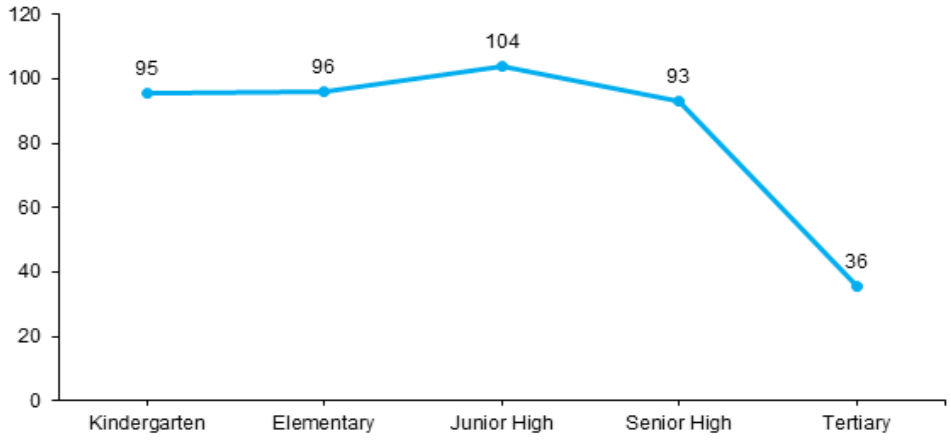



*Note: Tertiary education covers ISCED levels 5, 6, 7, and 8. Source: UIS data center, accessed in May 2023*

The GER for tertiary education increased between 2015 and 2016, but it decreased from 2016 to 2018 – the ratio stood at 30% in 2018 (*see Figure 10*). Between 2018 and 2021, the GER for tertiary education continued to increase. In 2021, the ratio was 36%.

When it comes to gender, more women are enrolled in tertiary education, compared to men. In the past years, women are about 10 percentage points more likely to be studying in tertiary education than men.

**Figure 11:** Gross enrollment rate from kindergarten to tertiary education, 2021




*Source: Data for kindergarten to senior high school are from DepEd and for tertiary education from UIS.*

Compared to basic education, enrollment in tertiary education is still limited. In 2021, the GER for kindergarten to senior high school exceeded 90% (*see Figure 11*). However, there is a prominent drop between senior high school and tertiary education, where GER for tertiary is only 36%, compared to 93% in senior high school.

SHS learners disclosed in the grassroot consultation that they face several challenges and problems in going to college and finding work. ALS learners and completers mentioned their various aspirations after completing the program. Some express their intention to work, in order to provide financial support to their families. Others plan to continue their education by enrolling in Senior High School and pursuing technical vocational courses, aiming to enhance their skills and expand their career opportunities. Some learners desire to return to their province to prioritize family bonds, while others aspire to work and build their own homes, reflecting their determination to achieve stability and independence. Pursuing a college education is another common goal. Furthermore, many learners exhibit an entrepreneurial spirit, expressing their desire to establish their own businesses.

- 4.3.3: Participation rate in technical-vocational programmes (15- to 24-year-olds) by sex

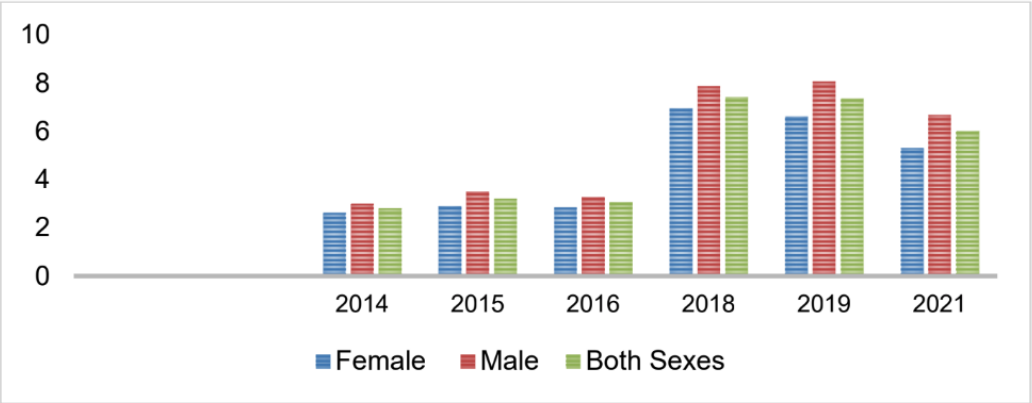
**Table 2.** Number of TESDA Enrollees and Graduates from 2018-2022 (aged 15- to 24-years old)

| Year | Enrolled | Graduates |
|---|---|---|
| 2018 | 1,277,820 | 1,195,231 |
| 2019 | 1,279,790 | 1,155,751 |
| 2020 | 348,873 | 309,223 |
| 2021 | 536,682 | 484,978 |
| 2022 | 500,843 | 486,009 |
| TOTAL | 3,944,008 | 3,631,192 |

*Source: Data from TESDA*

Table 2 shows the number of TESDA enrollees and graduates from 2018-2022, aged 15- to 24-years old. From 2018 to 2022, over 3.9 million aged 15- to 24-years old Filipinos enrolled in TESDA programs, aiming to hone their skills and boost their employability. However, despite graduating nearly 3.6 million individuals during this period, the data reveals intriguing trends. Notably, 2019 witnessed a surge in enrollments, surpassing other years, while 2018 saw the highest completion rate with the most graduates. However, the trend takes a sharp turn in 2020. Coinciding with the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, both enrollments and graduations plummeted significantly. Remarkably, data for the earlier years, 2015 to 2017, was currently not available.

**Figure 12.** Proportion (%) of 15-to- 24-years-old (by sex) enrolled in vocational education in the Philippines, 2014-2021




Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, authors' calculations

*As reported by PIDS*

Figure 12 shows the proportion of 15-to 24-years old (by sex) enrolled in vocational education in the Philippines from 2014 to 2021. The data shows that there is a gender gap in vocational education enrollment, with females falling behind males from 2014 to 2021. This highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions that promote equal access to quality vocational education for everyone, regardless of gender, socio-economic status, or location.

**Table 3.** Total Number of TVET Enrollees from 2015 to 2022

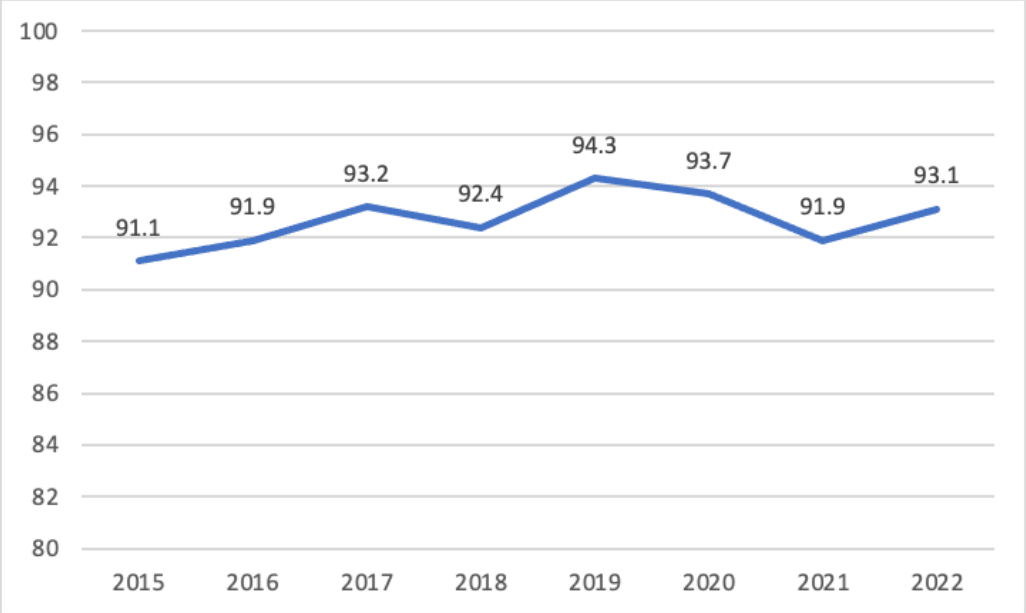
| Year | No. of TVET Enrollees |
|---|---|
| 2015 | 2,281,389 |
| 2016 | 2,269,665 |
| 2017 | 2,298,744 |
| 2018 | 2,285,473 |
| 2019 | 2,488,922 |
| 2020 | 802,218 |
| 2021 | 1,240,099 |
| 2022 | 1,260,244 |
| TOTAL | 14,926,7544 |

*Source: Data from TESDA*

The table above displays the total number of TVET enrollees from 2015 to 2022. Over 14.9 million individuals enrolled in TVET programs during this period which highlights the significant demand for technical skills and workforce development. Year 2019

witnessed the highest enrollment with 2.49 million individuals. A sharp decline occurred in 2020 with only 802,000 enrollees, coinciding with the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This suggests a significant disruption to program accessibility and student participation due to lockdowns and safety concerns. Enrollments began to recover in 2021 and 2022, reaching over 1.2 million each year. This indicates resilience and adaptation within the TVET sector despite the pandemic's impact.

**Figure 13.** TVET Certification Rate from 2015 to 2022




*Source: Data from TESDA*

The figure above exhibits the TVET certification rates from 2015 to 2022, offering insights into program effectiveness and graduate success. Throughout the eight (8) years, the average certification rate remained impressive at 92.6%, indicating a strong system for skills development and assessment.

## Key Challenges

Financial constraints are a common obstacle among SHS learners who plan to pursue higher education, as students struggle to afford tuition fees in private higher education and necessary learning materials. Some learners come from single-parent households, further adding to the financial burden. Additionally, the distance to tertiary schools can be an issue, making it challenging for learners to attend. Entrance examinations can be inaccessible for visually impaired applicants due to a lack of appropriate materials, and certain schools may not accommodate visually impaired learners, leading to discrimination. Other difficulties include adjusting to a new environment, high expectations from teachers, and pressure, particularly during entrance exams and the responsibility of supporting younger siblings.

## Target 4.4: Skills for Decent Work

By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

- 4.4.1: Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill

With the role of digital technology becoming more critical, the importance of possessing ICT skills also increases. The DICT National ICT Household Survey revealed that while 91% and 79% of the surveyed individuals aged 10 to 74 have watched television and have used a cellphone, respectively, 66% responded that they still do not use a computer and 53% have not accessed the internet[48]. In addition, UNICEF Philippines supports the development of ICT skills among youth and adults through the curation and customization of available online learning resources on digital citizenship in support of the ALS Learning Strand 6 (Digital Citizenship). 403 resources were mapped and 267 resources evaluated, covering digital concepts, digital operations and management, digital system network, digital applications, digital devices, and digital ethics. An online worksheet that is easy to use and update serves as a central repository in the mapping and evaluation of the digital citizenship resources.

Additionally, the Learning to Earning Pathways (LEaP!) intends to strengthen the capacity of youth-serving organizations in supporting learning to earning pathways for disadvantaged young people through UNICEF global initiatives:

1) YOMA (Youth Agency Marketplace), a digital marketplace addressing skills development (initially focusing on basic and advanced digital skills) and employment challenges while increasing youth agency and engagement;

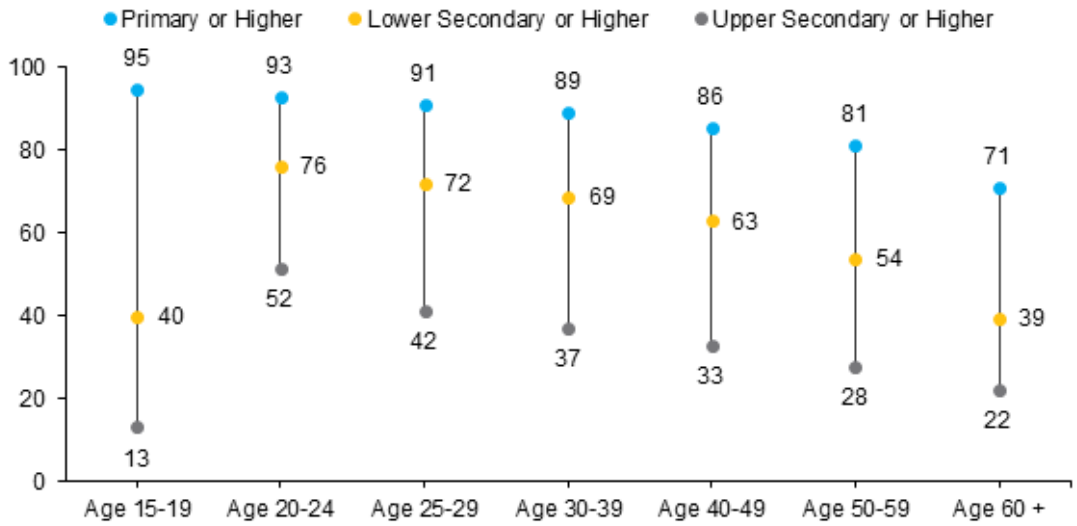
2) SAP Educate to Employ - work-readiness program training young people aged 18 to 24 on human, foundational, and highly specialized digital skills.

[48] Department of Information and Communications Technology. *National ICT Household Survey, 2019. https://dict.gov.ph/ictstatitics/nicths2019.*

"More than 90% of youth/adult people aged 15 to 29 have completed at least elementary schools, but education attainment rates decrease among the older generation."

- 4.4.3: Youth/adult educational attainment rates by age group and level of education

**Figure 14:** Educational attainment rates by age group and level of education, 2019




*Source: FLEMMS 2019*

A larger proportion of the young generation achieves higher education attainment, compared to the older generation. More than 90% of youth/adult aged 15 to 29 have completed at least elementary school today (*see Figure 14*). However, a less share of the young population attained junior high school education – 70% of those aged 20 to 29 have completed junior high school. Education attainment rates for senior high school are even lower. Only 52% of people aged 20 to 24 and 42% of those aged 25 to 29 have completed at least senior high school. Education attainment rates decrease among the older generation. The education attainment rate for elementary school is 80% and above for people aged 30 to 39. The attainment rate for junior high school is less than 70% for the same age group. In terms of senior high school attainment, less than 40% of the older population aged 30 and above have completed at least senior high school.

The Philippine constitution recognizes non-formal education and other types of out-of-school study programs as an official channel in the country's education system. DepEd established ALS as a non-formal second chance education for those who did not finish basic education in the formal school system. ALS prepares learners to pass the A&E test which awards passers a certificate equivalent to a formal elementary or junior high school degree.

According to the grassroot consultation, ALS learners aspire to pursue higher education, whether in college or high school, and view ALS as a crucial stepping stone towards further academic achievements. Furthermore, ALS attracts learners who have faced personal challenges such as early pregnancy, early marriage, or stubbornness, and provides them an opportunity to continue their education despite these obstacles.

## Key Challenges

It is essential to provide youth with foundational and work-readiness skills so they can qualify for further education, employment, or entrepreneurship - enabling a successful transition into adulthood. In spite of a strong demand for skilled and job-ready individuals in the local job market, the Philippines continues to grapple with job skills mismatch, unemployment, and underemployment. As of June 2022, the Labor Force Survey (LFS) revealed that out of nearly 3 million unemployed Filipinos, 854,000 were aged between 15 to 24 years, resulting in a youth unemployment rate of 12%. Although this is an improvement from the 17% recorded in 2021, where up to 1.7 million young individuals were unemployed, it remains a significant concern for the country. Adaptability to a dynamic and competitive environment is crucial for employees. However, employers often find fresh graduates lacking in task management efficiency, leadership potential, customer empathy, and situational analysis.

Moreover, the rapid technological advancements and digital disruptions brought about by the fourth industrial revolution (IR 4.0) highlight the necessity for countries to re-skill/upskill their workforce and promote innovation to remain competitive in the global market. It is essential for a country's workforce to be adequately prepared for the most in-demand jobs of the future, reducing vulnerability to rapidly changing job requirements.

Several reasons are behind the inability of many Filipinos to attend school. These include poverty, financial constraints, family issues such as early pregnancy or marriage, lack of personal interest, the high cost of education, unemployment, job-seeking, illness, and disabilities. Data suggest that the older generation has been passed by formal education than the younger generation. The situation may have been exacerbated by the pandemic, leading to a notable increase in Filipino children and youth dropping out of school.

## Strategies

Recognizing these challenges, strategies for skills development which include strengthening the on-the-job training/internship component in all levels of education shall be strengthened.

For basic education, DepEd is currently undergoing a review of the K to12 Program to decongest the curriculum content and put more focus on those most essential learning competencies (MELCS) that need to be learned as well as make it relevant to produce competent and job-ready learners. Alongside this, DepEd's BEDP proposes to ensure alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with current and emerging industry and global standards that will pave the way for the learners of K to 12 basic education to be equipped with necessary skills and attributes to pursue their chosen field. The continued strong partnership with counterpart education agencies in technical-vocational and higher education, and with the industry partners will ensure that the mismatch skills are likewise addressed. DepEd ensures that the implementation of the SHS Program-TVL track is according to the standards TESDA has set to ensure

that graduates are able to obtain the necessary skill sets in order to be issued with the appropriate certification.

## Target 4.5: Equity and Inclusion

By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

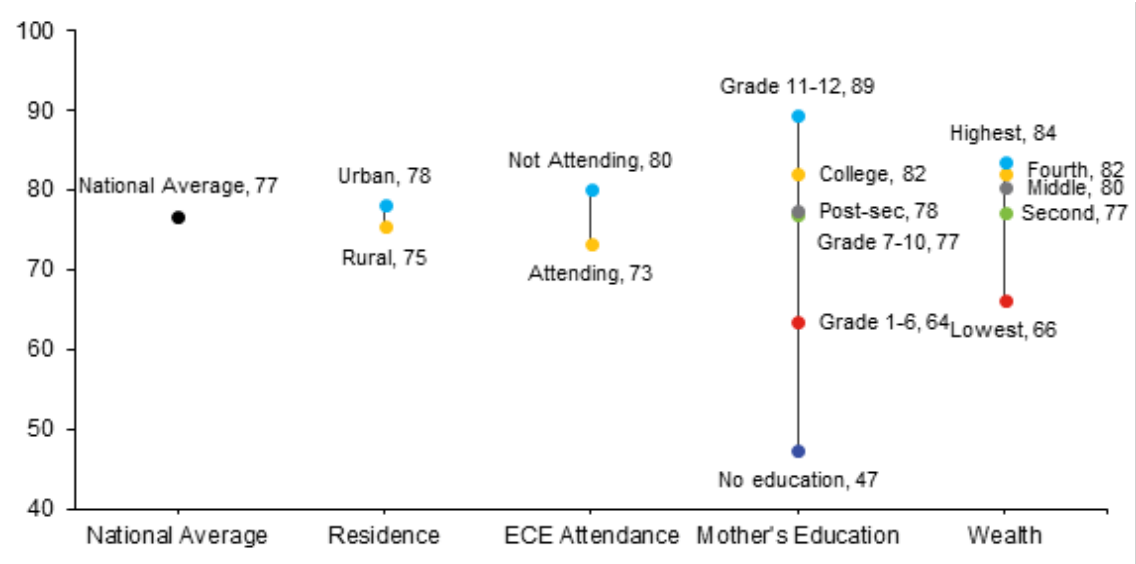
"Household economic status largely sets apart children's education-related achievement from early childhood education to tertiary education."

- 4.5.1: Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated.

### Equity in Early Childhood Education (ECE)

On the national average, 77% of children aged 24-59 months were developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being in 2022. However, disparities are seen by their residence, ECE program attendance, mother's educational attainment, and family wealth.

**Figure 15:** Percentage of children aged 24–59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning, and psychosocial well-being by background characteristics, 2022




*Source: Adapted from 2022 Philippine National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS)*

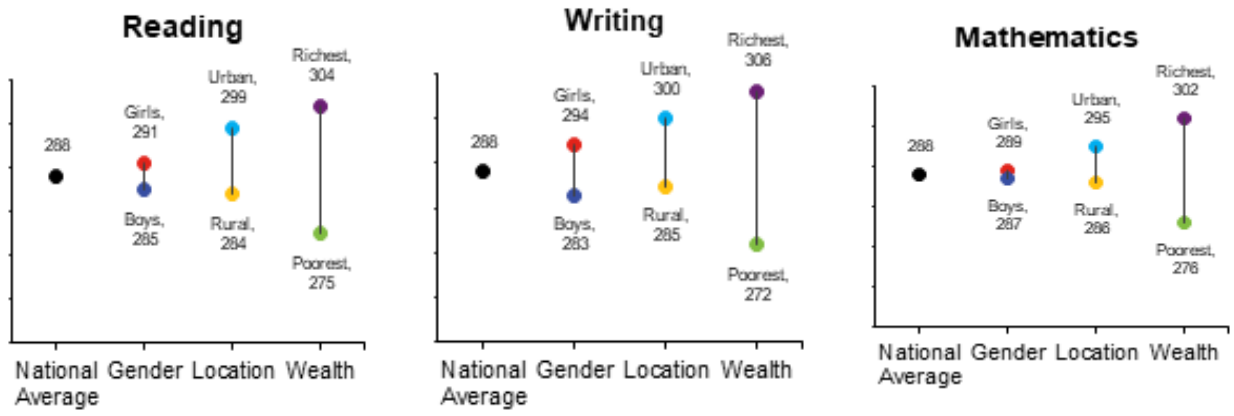
A disparity in age-appropriate levels of development by residence is relatively small (*see Figure 15*). In 2022, 78% of children under 5 years old in urban areas and 75% of those in rural areas were developmentally on track. Children who are attending an ECE program are more likely to be developmentally on track. 80% of children attending the

ECE program exhibited age-appropriate levels of development, compared to 73% of peers who were not receiving ECE. It was raised in the grassroot consultation that parents perceive the benefits of a center-based ECE program. Children learn to be independent in day care. Teachers also reported that children who attended day care are more prepared to transit to kindergarten.

However, a mother's education is largely associated with children's development. While more than 75% of children whose mother completed at least secondary education exhibited age-appropriate levels of development, only 47% of children under 5 years old whose mother has no education were developmentally on track. Similarly, children's development and family wealth are related. 84% of children from the richest households were developmentally on track, while the figure was 66% for those from the poorest family.

Inequalities by gender, residence, and family wealth are also apparent in performance of a learning assessment in basic education. Test scores in reading, writing, and mathematics among Grade 5 students in SEA-PLM suggest that although a disparity by gender was small, girls were slightly more likely to perform better than boys in reading, writing, and mathematics (*see Figure 16*). Similarly, learning gaps by residence disfavor those from rural areas. Children from rural areas were less likely to perform better in reading, writing, and mathematics than those from urban areas. Moreover, a family's income status is largely associated with children's performance. Children from the lowest-earning families were at a disadvantage of learning performance, compared to peers from the highest-earning families.

**Figure 16:** Test scores in reading, writing, and mathematics in SEA-PLM by student characteristics, 2019




*Source: SEA-PLM 2019*

Close the learning gaps in remote and disadvantaged multigrade schools with digital learning.

Multigrade schools combine two or more grade levels that are taught simultaneously under one teacher. They are generally located in the most remote and disadvantaged areas in the country to ensure continuous inclusive and equitable quality basic education for all Filipino children. DepEd and UNICEF have introduced a digital learning intervention in multigrade schools to expedite recovery from learning losses caused by

the pandemic and other natural calamities. The intervention provided tablets and laptops preloaded with offline teaching and learning materials which includes the "Learning Passport", a learning management system developed by UNICEF and Microsoft Community Training. Since 2017, the intervention has benefited 11,594 students, 958 teachers, 192 school heads, and 1,140 parents and community members in 196 schools. It produced positive results such as improved classroom management for teachers and increased engagement and interest in learning for students.

## Equity in Basic Education

**Table 4.** Gender parity index (GPI) on enrolment in basic education from 2015 to 2022

| 4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male) in enrollment rate | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4.5.1.1 Ratio of girls to boys in primary education | 0.92 | 0.92 | 0.92 | 0.93 | 0.93 | 0.93 | 0.93 | 0.92 |
| 4.5.1.2 Ratio of girls to boys in junior high school | 1.02 | 1.02 | 1.01 | 1.00 | 0.99 | 0.99 | 0.97 | 0.96 |
| 4.5.1.3 Ratio of girls to boys in senior high school | .. | 1.11 | 1.12 | 1.10 | 1.09 | 1.11 | 1.10 | 1.04 |

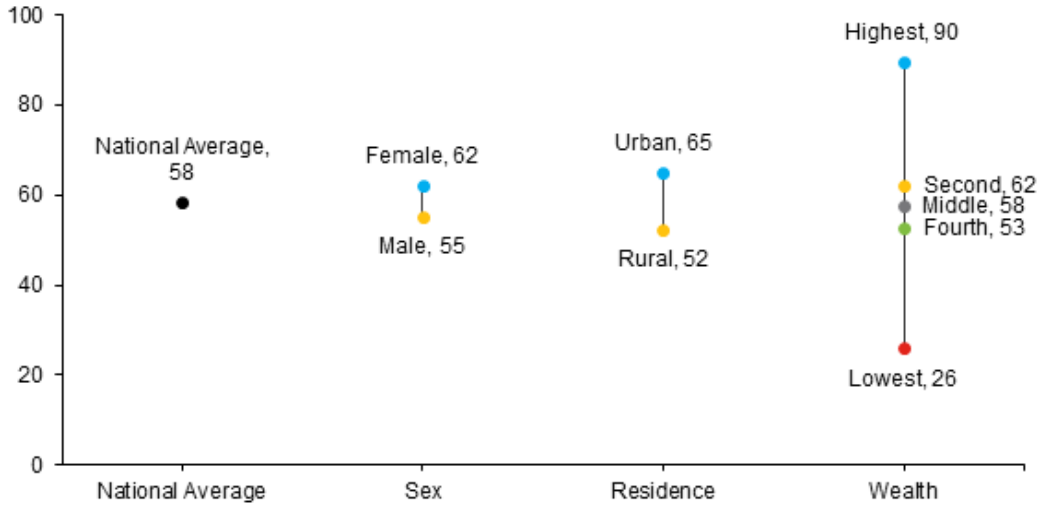
*Source: DepEd*

Table 4 shows the consistent status of gender disparity from 2015 to 2022 in primary education which is in favor of boys. While in junior high school, there is a consistent pattern of almost equal access between boys and girls from 2015 to 2021, except in 2022. However, in senior high school, it indicates a disparity in favor of girls from 2016 to 2022. A further investigation on how to almost achieve equal access for both primary and senior high school may be identified and on how to sustain the progress in junior high school.

## Equity in Tertiary Education

A similar trend is observed in tertiary education attendance where the largest disparity is seen in family wealth. A gender disparity in tertiary education attendance is less prominent as 62% of women and 55% of men attended tertiary education in 2018 (*see Figure 17*). Likewise, a disparity by residence appears less pronounced. People from urban areas (65%) were more likely to attend tertiary education as opposed to those from rural areas (52%). However, a disparity by family wealth is the most extreme, favoring people from rich families – 90% of people from the highest-earning families attended tertiary education, compared to 26% of those from the lowest-earning households.

**Figure 17:** Gross attendance ratio for tertiary education by student characteristics, 2018




*Note: Gross attendance ratio is computed by dividing the number of students attending tertiary education regardless of age by the population of the 5-year age group starting from the official secondary school graduation age.*
*Source: UIS data center, accessed in May 2023*

"More than 60% of kindergarten to Grade 3 learners speak non-Tagalog languages as their mother tongue."

- 4.5.2: Percentage of students in a) early grades, b) at the end of primary, and c) at the end of lower secondary education who have their first or home language as language of instruction

Among 8,769,669 learners in kindergarten to Grade 3 for School Year 2021-2022, 92% (or 8,086,378) of the learners speak 19 major languages as their mother tongue. The majority of them use Tagalog as their mother tongue, constituting 39% (or 3,367,400 learners). This is followed by Sinugbuanong Binisaya (Cebuano Language) used by 23% (or 2,036,342 learners) and Hiligaynon (Ilonggo) used by 7% (or 590,035 learners). The other major Filipino languages used by kindergarten to Grade 3 learners as mother tongue include Iloko, Bikol, Waray, Maranao, Kapampangan, and Maguindanaoan, Bahasa-Sug, among others.

To respond to the linguistic diversity, the country enacted the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (R.A. 10533 in 2012) which stipulated MTB-MLE in kindergarten to Grade 3. The Department issued DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2012 or the Guidelines on the Implementation of the MTB-MLE. Starting from Grade 4, English and Tagalog are used as the languages of instruction.

The importance of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, especially in the early grades, was raised and highlighted during the grassroot consultation, along with the challenges of transitioning to other languages.

- 4.5.3: Existence of funding mechanisms to reallocate education resources to disadvantaged populations.

DepEd promotes equity initiatives for disadvantaged school-age children, youth, and adults, through the Inclusive Education Programs. Fundings to support these inclusive

education programs are included in the Deped's Annual Budget Proposal, proposed to the Department of Budget Management (DBM) and are subsequently approved by the President as the General Appropriations Act (GAA).

These Inclusive Education Programs include the following:

- Special Needs Education (SNED) Program for learners with special needs.
- Multigrade Education (MG) Program to support the learners in multigrade schools where the enrollment does not warrant the organization of monograde classes.
- Madrasah Education Program (MEP) for Muslim learners.
- Indigenous People's Education (IPEd) Program as a response to the right of the Indigenous Peoples (IP) to basic education responsive to their context.
- Flexible Learning Options (FLO)- ALS for out-of-school youth and adults who are literate but have not completed 10 years of basic education.

In the 2023 GAA, 5,413,821,000 pesos were appropriated for the Inclusive Education Programs and 1,500,000,000 pesos for the Last Mile Schools Program (LMSP) in geographically isolated, disadvantaged, and conflict-affected regions and their counterparts in urban areas (*see Table 5*).

**Table 5:** Education finance allocated to disadvantaged populations (in pesos), 2023

| Inclusive Education Programs | | | | | LMSP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MG | IPEd | MEP | SNED | FLO - ALS | |
| 23,080,000 | 154,431,000 | 359,503,000 | 581,625,000 | 4,295,182,000 | 1,500,000,000 |
| 5,413,821,000 | | | | | |

*Source: General Appropriations Act (GAA) 2023*

Other programs to support disadvantaged populations include the School Based Feeding Program to curb hunger and nutritional concerns experienced by learners, and the provision of Special Hardship Allowance to reinforce non-wage benefits to teachers deployed in the Last Mile Schools, multigrade, and hardship post schools.

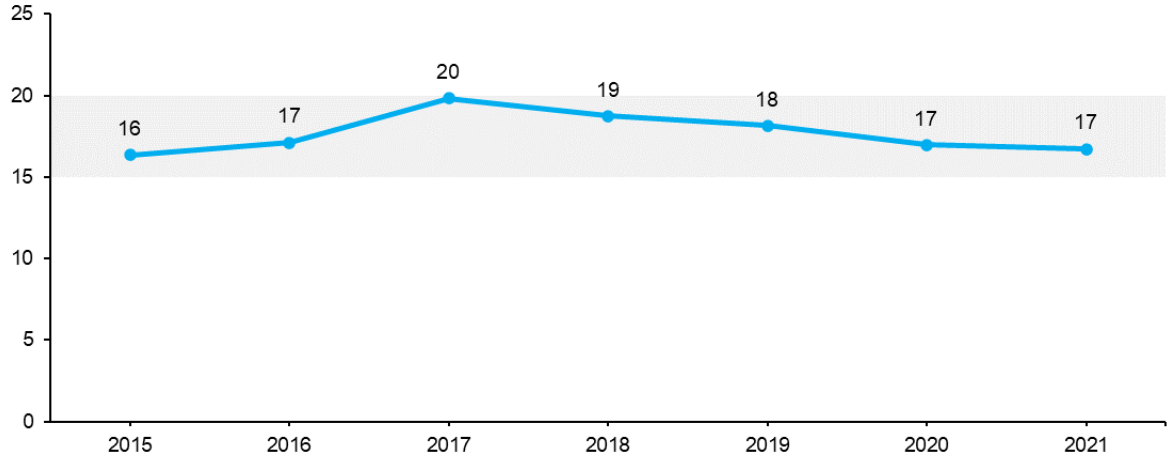
**The total education expenditure accounted for 17% of the total public expenditure and 3.9% of GDP in 2021.**

- **4.5.4: Education expenditure per student by level of education and source of funding**

In 2021, the Philippines allocated 751 billion pesos to education. The education budget is allocated to kindergarten (6%), elementary school (37%), junior high school (26%), senior high school (10%), TVET (2%), and higher education (19%). The Education 2030 Framework for Action encourages countries to allocate at least 4–6% of their GDP and 15–20% of public expenditure to education. In terms of the public education expenditure as a share of the total government expenditure, the Philippines has been above the minimum benchmark of 15% since 2015 (*see Figure 18*). In 2021 where the latest data are available, 17% of the total government expenditure was allocated to education. As

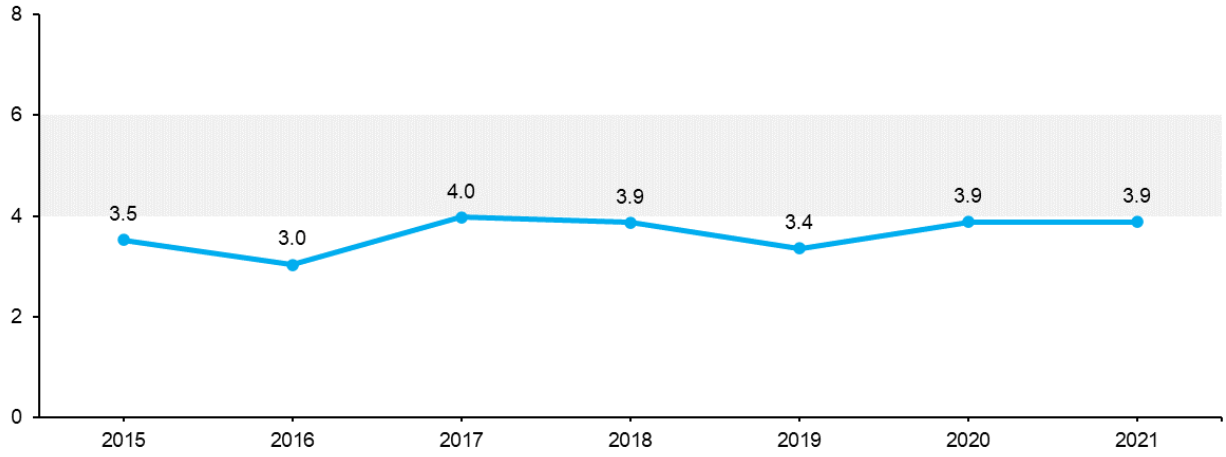
to the public education expenditure as share of GDP, despite the increase in the share between 2015 and 2021, the Philippines has not met the minimum benchmark of 4% yet (*see Figure 19*). In 2021, the education expenditure amounted for 3.9% of the GDP.

**Figure 18:** Proportion of total government spent on education, 2015-2021




*Source: DepEd*

**Figure 19:** Proportion of government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP




*Source: DepEd*

## Key Challenges

Despite the overall progress the Philippines has made in education in the last years, there is a marked disparity by learners' characteristics. While a mother's education appears to largely set apart children's age-appropriate levels of development, household wealth is highly associated with academic performance in basic education and even more with access to tertiary education.

Low income-households may prioritize providing their necessities before meeting their children's education needs. As a result, children from these households have a higher tendency to skip classes or start school already behind their peers. They may also have difficulties in providing basic school supplies which could have stimulated the child's

interest and love of learning. Additionally, as parents of these households need to work longer hours or are already exhausted from the day's work, they only have little or no time to spend with their children to support their learning. In the worst-case scenarios, children from these households may choose to not go to school as they need to help their families work in farms, plantations, fisheries, dangerous mines, streets, factories, private homes as domestic workers, or help in the family's small business. Not only are these children exposed to occupational health and safety hazards, but they miss classes and are unable to finish their education.

Further, the country's geologic characteristics bring about the challenges of accessibility to basic resources including electricity, potable water, internet connectivity and proper roads, especially among the Last Mile schools or schools with less than four classrooms, usually makeshift and nonstandard ones. These schools also lacked funds for repairs and for new construction projects in the last four (4) years. Furthermore, these are schools with multigrade classes, with less than five (5) teachers, and a population of less than 100 learners, more than 75% of whom are Indigenous Peoples. Moreover, the risks to which the learners are exposed also include environmental calamities, and both man-made and natural disasters, causing class suspensions, damage in learning resources and or destruction of school facilities.

Amidst DepEd's efforts towards digitalization, rural schools, especially in far-flung areas, still encounter challenges in receiving real-time updates and transmitting data as communication infrastructures are commonly situated in urban areas. Nevertheless, the difficulty in accessing dependable, inexpensive, and secure internet, highlighted during the pandemic, was not foreign to learners and teachers in the urban areas. Some of them also experienced unstable internet connectivity and unavailability of devices which made online learning taxing.

The Constitution mandated the country to assign the highest budgetary priority to education. However, the country's education expenditure remains below the global standard of 4 to 6% of GDP. Funding for Inclusive Education Programs remain insufficient as shown by prevalent issues in Special Needs Education like inadequate SNED training for teachers teaching children with disabilities and lack of appropriate curriculum guide, instructional materials, and school facilities. Similarly, the lack of culture-based infrastructure and resources in the IP communities continues to be problematic. These problems, along with inadequate qualified teachers to teach in Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) classes, especially in remote areas, limited training on pedagogic skills, and low and delayed allowance or salary, are also observed in implementation of Madrasah Education.

## Strategies

The country implemented the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) which aims, among others, to alleviate poverty through social development, breaking the intergenerational poverty cycle by investing in the health and education of poor children through programs such as enrollment of children in daycare, elementary, and secondary schools. To supplement costs associated with the children's schooling, the government provides education grant equivalent to P300 a month per child enrolled in

daycare or elementary school, P500 a month per child enrolled in junior high school, and P700 a month per child enrolled in senior high school, provided that a household may register a maximum of 3 children for the program. Although the 4Ps requires school-aged children to be in school, it is recommended that the requirement goes beyond school attendance. The learners' performance must also be assessed to determine the program's impact on the learning of the child – be it academically, in sports, or in arts.

Moreover, in DepEd's MATATAG Agenda, four (4) critical components were identified to resolve basic education woes. The third component is: "Take good care of learners by promoting learner well-being, inclusive education, and a positive learning environment." Towards this end, DepEd commits to strengthening inclusive education programs, including ALS Program, Last Mile Schools Program (LMSP), and programs for IP learners with disabilities to provide assessment assistive mechanisms to students with disabilities, eradicate illiteracy through relevant policy issuances, community literacy programs interventions, and to involve parents and guardians in the education of children.

Under the LMS Program, makeshift classrooms were transformed into standard ones, solar panels were installed in areas with no electricity, school site ownership was processed, which enabled unhampered school building constructions, and several teachers were deployed in these schools. As of February 2023, 73 sites have already been completed across the country, with 152 sites ongoing construction. Likewise, DepEd commits to diversifying Education Technology (EdTech) Solutions for all schools, particularly the Last Miles Schools, to democratize and equalize access of learners and teachers to education technology regardless of location and economic condition of the community where the school is located.

The Department of Science and Technology through its Science Education Institute (DOST-SEI) implements the Republic Act 7687 otherwise known as "Science and Technology Act of 1994," is a scholarship program to finance the education of poor, talented and deserving students desiring to pursue careers in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) including science teaching. The scholarship program also envisions to enlist two scholars in each municipality and congressional districts all over the country.

## Target 4.6: Youth and Adult Literacy and Numeracy

By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

- 4.6.1: Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex

Functional literacy is "a significantly higher level of literacy which includes not only reading and writing skills but also numeracy skills. The skills must be sufficiently advanced to enable the individual to participate fully and efficiently in activities

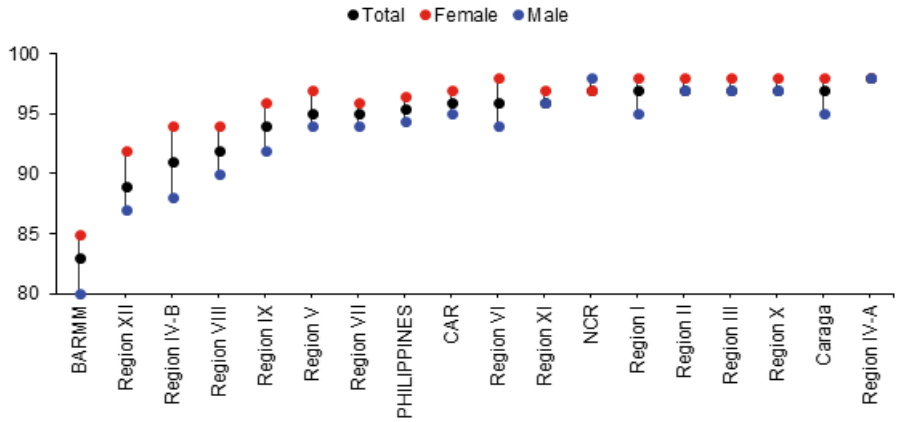
commonly occurring in their life situation that require a reasonable capability of communicating by written language." [49]

The functional literacy rate for young people aged 15 to 24 slightly increased from 94% in 2013 and 95% in 2019.[50] The youth functional literacy rate (*see Figure 20*) stood at 95% in 2019, which was lower than the basic literacy rate (98%). The functional literacy rate is even lower in BARMM with 83% of young people there were functionally literate in 2019. A gender disparity is in favor of women (85%) over men (80%).

The functional literacy rate for adults aged 25 to 64 also marginally increased from 90% to 91% between 2013 and 2019. The adult functional literacy rate was lower than the adult basic literacy rate (96%) in 2019. 90% of men achieved the minimum benchmark of basic knowledge in functional literacy, compared to 93% of women. Adults in BARMM (65%) are far less likely to achieve proficiency in functional literacy skills, compared to the national average (91%).

Functional Literacy Test is embedded in the ALS curriculum. According to an ALS teacher, the test helps teachers determine the appropriate grade level for each learner and tailor their learning instruction and interventions accordingly.

**Figure 20:** Youth functional literacy rates by sex, 2019




*Source: FLEMMS 2019*

UNICEF expands ALS in BARMM to provide education for out-of-school youth and adults, with a focus on protracted crisis areas. The program promotes inclusivity for persons with disabilities, indigenous people, rebel returnees, and conflict survivors, including children. For school year 2022-2023, the ALS Expansion Project in Maguindanao is funded by the governments of the Netherlands and Norway, with UNICEF providing technical support. The project aims to reach traditionally excluded groups in Shariff Aguak, Mamasapano, Datu Salibo, and Datu Saudi Ampatuan (collectively known as the 'SPMS Box'). Twin projects funded by Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the European Union (EU) invest in children, adolescents, and youth in Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur. They aim to increase

[49] Philippine Statistics Authority, *2019 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) Final Report*, 2021.
[50] Ibid

resilience, reduce radical narrative influences, and empower youth as advocates for peace and development.

**98% of young people aged 15 to 24 were able to read at least at a basic level.**

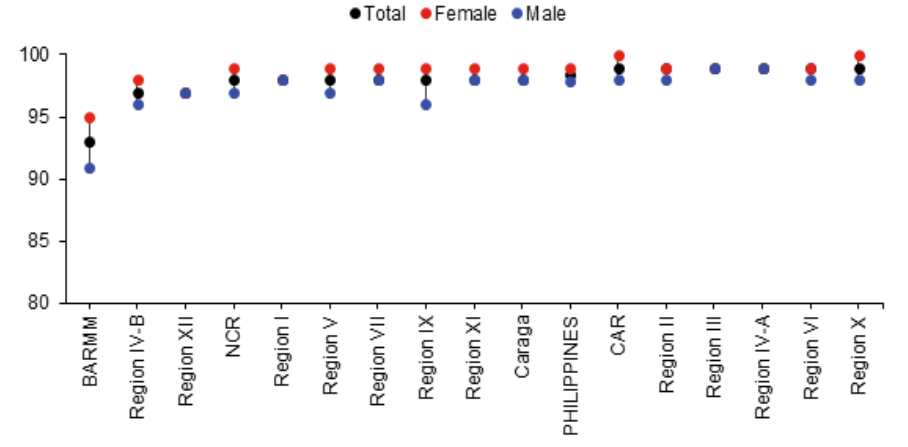
- 4.6.2: Youth and adult literacy rate

Basic literacy refers to "the ability of a person to read and write with understanding a simple message in any language or dialect."[51] Basic literacy rates for the youth population aged 15 to 24 years did not change at 98%.[52] In 2019, gender disparity in basic youth literacy is relatively small, although women (99%) are slightly more likely to be literate than men (98%) (*see Figure 21*). There are some regions that have a youth literacy rate below the national average. In BARMM, the youth literacy rate was 93% in 2019. The rate for young men in BARMM stood at 91%, which is the lowest figure among the youth population.

In terms of basic literacy for the adult population aged 25 to 64, there was a slight decrease from 96% in 2013 to 95% in 2019. Looking at the national average, it is notable that the basic literacy rate (96%) among adults was slightly lower than the youth basic literacy rate (98%). Similar to basic literacy among youth, there is a disparity by gender, marginally in favor of women (96%) over men (95%). BARMM has the lowest basic literacy rate among adults, which was 76% in 2019. Only 75% of adult women in BARMM were literate.

Although there is a high level of numeracy and literacy rate among its youth and adults, functional literacy is still considered as one of the areas where the Philippines is lagging behind. Based on historical data, its projected value in 2030 is expected to have a 52.6-point gap from its targeted value in the same year, thus the need to accelerate efforts.

**Figure 21:** Youth basic literacy rates by sex, 2019




*Source: FLEMMS 2019*

Only 65% of adults aged 25 and over in BARMM achieved proficiency in functional literacy skills.

[51] Philippine Statistics Authority, *2019 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) Final Report*, 2021.
[52] Ibid.

## Key Challenges

In line with the marginal increase in recent years, illiteracy remains a significant issue in the Philippines. The data suggest that 9% of adults aged 25 to 64 were functionally illiterate in 2019. In particular, the share of functionally illiterate adults was as high as 35% in BARMM. Many adults, especially in rural and marginalized communities, lack access to quality education due to financial constraints, the distance of schools from their home, and work-related constraints. The limited availability of resources such as reading materials, textbooks, teaching pedagogy and language barriers are some of the factors that affect the improvement of adult literacy in the country. A low literacy rate among adults can have adverse effects on the availability of job opportunities and income for individuals and communities.

## Strategies

To improve the youth and adult literacy rate, especially among men, and to build a more educated and empowered society, it is essential to ensure equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults. Addressing the challenges and taking a holistic approach reform on adult literacy rate requires sustained efforts and strong collaboration among LGUs, educators, families, and communities. With this, DepEd must work towards improving the Basic Literacy Program (BLP) that aims to eradicate illiteracy among out-of-school adults. According to RA 9155, the BLP is a program component of ALS which provides a lifelong learning process acquired outside the formal school system but complements learning acquired in both formal and non-formal basic education.

Moreover, DepEd must provide continuous professional development for teachers to equip them with effective literacy instruction techniques and strategies. Also, the agency should encourage parents or guardians to play an active role in their children's education and conduct workshops for parents or guardians to support literacy development at home.

## Target 4.7: Global Citizenship

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Key aspects of Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development, and Comprehensive Sexuality Education are embedded in the national curriculum.

- 4.7.1: Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment

- 4.7.2: Percentage of schools that provide life skills-based HIV and sexuality education

In terms of Global Citizenship Education (GCED), DepEd has been updating and recalibrating its curriculum to be up to par with international curricula, including the integration of GCED. Among the initiatives of DepEd's International Cooperation Office (ICO) is the conduct of the Korea-Philippines Teacher Exchange Program (KPTET) Learning Series as a platform to strengthen the SDGs in GCED. The series aimed to exchange innovative and promising approaches on how to fully harness the potential of the four pillars of learning to support SDGs and Global Citizenship and use ICT as a platform for online collaboration and learning.

The Philippine Normal University (PNU), designated as the National Center for Teacher Education by virtue of RA 9647, currently houses the GCED Cooperation Centre Philippines (GCC) which aims to serve as a pivotal hub to practice and spread GCED in the Philippines at various levels and contexts. Likewise, PNU serves as the country's secretariat for all GCED initiatives and projects. Currently, PNU, DepEd, and CHED undertake initiatives to promote and advance GCED through different approaches such as teacher training, research endeavors, and advocacy and mobility programs, as well as curriculum development and integration efforts.

As to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), the Philippine government enacted RA 9512, otherwise known as the National Environmental Awareness and Education Act of 2008, to mandate concerned agencies to integrate environmental education into public and private school curricula at all levels, including barangay daycare, preschool, non-formal, technical vocational, professional, indigenous learning, and out-of-school youth courses. Similarly, under RA 9163, colleges and universities offering baccalaureate degree courses, as well as schools offering at least 2-year technical-vocational courses are mandated to include the National Service Training Program (NSTP) in their curricula. One of the program components of the NSTP is the Civic Welfare Training Service (CWTS) which refers to programs or activities that contribute to the general welfare and the betterment of life for the members of the community or the enhancement of facilities, especially those devoted to improving health, education, environment, among others. In basic education, DepEd implemented the "School Inside a Garden (SIGA) Program", anchoring on the core value of "Makakalikasan" that supports the national greening program. Gulayan sa Paaralan Program (GPP) was also implemented to promote food security in public schools and communities through planting of locally grown vegetables. The harvested products shall be used in the School-Based Feeding Program.

DepEd recognizes the roles and responsibilities of the school system to give learners their right to good health by leading the implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). With this, the agency issued DepEd Order No. 31, s. 2018 or the Policy Guidelines on the Implementation of the Comprehensive Sexuality Education which covers all learners of public and private elementary, junior and senior high schools, and of learning centers for Special Education, ALS, laboratory schools of State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs).

The CSE is a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality that is scientific, age-and-developmentally appropriate, culturally and gender responsive, and with a rights-based approach. It teaches life skills among learners to help them develop critical thinking in relation to risky behaviors related to poor reproductive health outcomes, enhance self-esteem and develop respectful intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships that enable them to deal with complex changes happening throughout their lives.

DepEd includes the following core topics and subtopics across grade levels and subject areas in the K to 12 Curriculum: a) Human Body and Body Development; b) Personhood; c) Healthy Relationships; d) Sexuality and Sexual Behaviors; e) Sexual and Reproductive Health, which includes discussion on the Consequences of Early Pregnancy and STI and HIV-AIDS; f) Personal Safety; and g) Gender, Culture, and Human Rights.

The MEP has integrated the CSE Standards, Core Topics, Core Values and Core Life skills in the following subject areas: MAPEH, Science, Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (ESP), Araling Panlipunan (AP), and Personality Development.

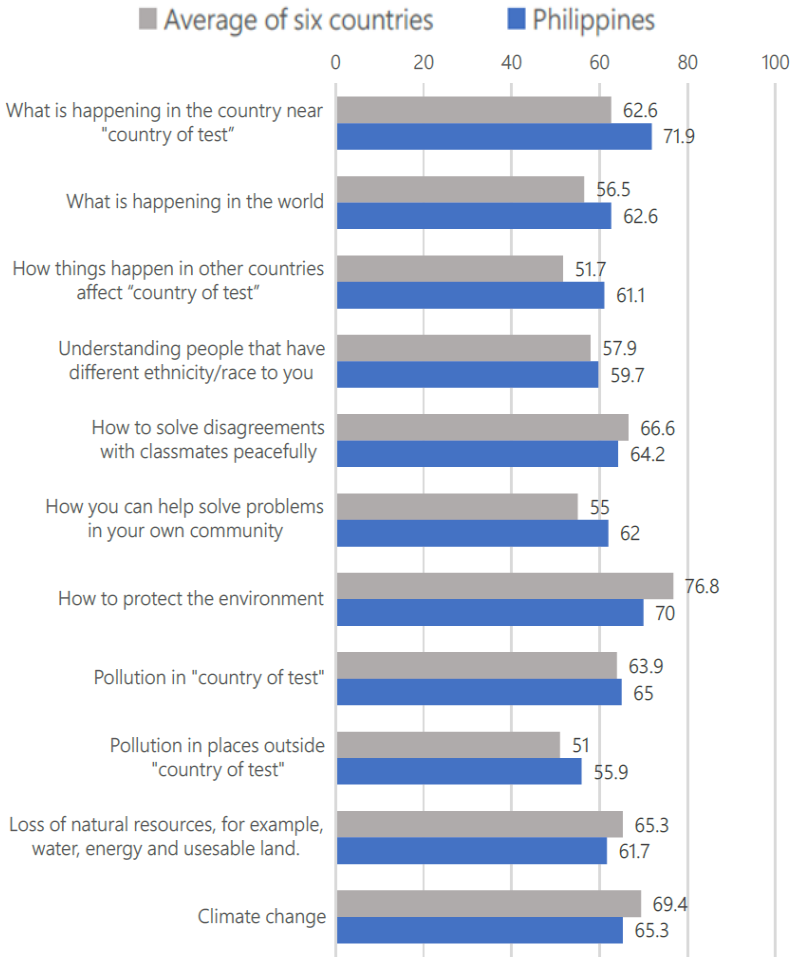
According to the teachers who participated in the grassroot consultations, reproductive health is discussed in the classroom during the time allotted for Science, while STI and HIV/AIDS are tackled in the SHS subject Trends, Networks, and Critical Thinking in the 21st century.

**More than 70% of Grade 5 students learn adequately about what is happening in the neighboring countries.**

- 4.7.4: Percentage of students in lower secondary education showing adequate understanding of issues relating to global citizenship and sustainability
- 4.7.5: Percentage of students in lower secondary showing proficiency in knowledge of environmental science and geoscience

Attitudes, values, and engagement in global citizenship were measured in the first round of SEA-PLM in 2019 that the Philippines participated in. Questions relating to global citizenship were administered via background questionnaires for students and teachers in Grade 5. In the topics related to global and regional events in SEA-PLM 2019, 72% of Grade 5 students identified that they have learned the most in class about "what is happening inside the country near the Philippines," which exhibits a higher percentage than the average of SEA-PLM participating countries (63%) (*see Figure 22*). On the other hand, they were least exposed to a topic related to "pollution in places outside the Philippines (56%)."

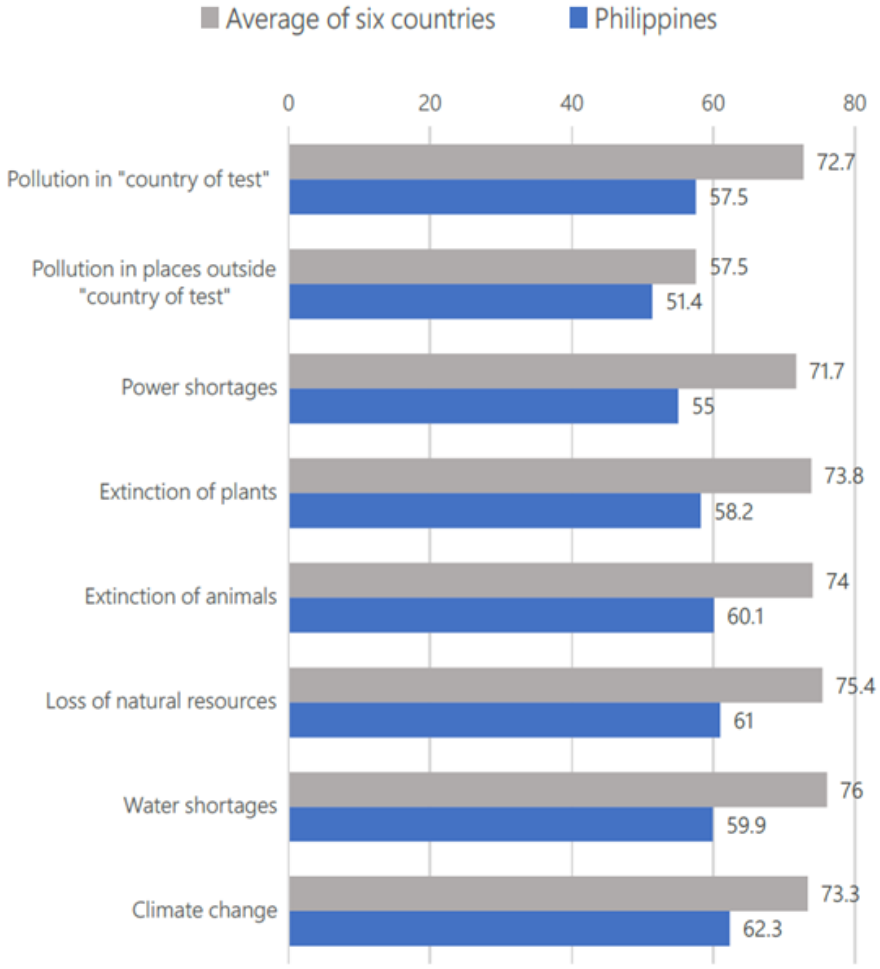
**Figure 22:** Percentage of Grade 5 students who perceive global citizenship topics learned at school, 2019




*Note: the percentage displays students who reported learning "a lot" or "some"*
*Source: DepEd & UNICEF. (2021). SEA-PLM 2019 National Report of the Philippines.*

SEA-PLM 2019 also measured the perception of Grade 5 learners on environmental sustainability issues. Filipino Grade 5 students were most concerned about climate change among the different environmental problems (62%) and were least concerned about pollution in places outside the Philippines (51%). All percentages of concerned Filipino Grade 5 students were lower than the average percentages of six (6) countries for all the environmental issues (*see Figure 23*).

**Figure 23:** Percentage of Grade 5 students who were worried about environmental sustainability issues, 2019




*Source: DepEd & UNICEF. (2021). SEA-PLM 2019 National Report of the Philippines.*

According to the PISA 2018 results, 68% of 15-year-old students achieved at least the minimum proficiency level in environmental science, which is the lowest ranking among participating Asia-Pacific countries, following Malaysia (72%) and Thailand (72%).

To facilitate adolescent empowerment and civic engagement through participatory and meaningful community-based climate action, UNICEF supports DepEd in enhancing Climate Change Adaptation Mitigation (CCAM) education. This initiative is being scaled up by improving teachers' self-efficacy in integrating climate change education into their teaching and learning delivery as well as co-designing and implementing climate action activities with their learners.

## Key Challenges

Global citizenship education teaches young people about sustainable development, human rights, equality, peace and conflict, diversity and identity, globalization, and economic interdependence. It enables them to understand and appreciate the interconnectedness of all life on the planet, as well as to communicate their ideas and make decisions in a fair, ethical, critical, and respectful manner.

Despite the integration of CSE in the curriculum, there are still people who are in the opinion that sex is an inappropriate topic for conversation, much less a subject in schools. Although there are rising incidences of teenage pregnancy, sexual violence, and HIV – Sex Education remains a sensitive topic in the Philippines. In the grassroot consultations conducted, it was found that while some schools are open to having classroom conversations on safe sex education, having topics ranging from the use of contraceptives to responsible parenthood and HIV/AIDS, other schools remain to be conservative and only give advice on discipline and sexual restraint. With this, learners tend to lean on their peers and online resources like Youtube and Tiktok for sex education. Aside from this stigma, the implementation of CSE faces problems, among which are inadequate training among instructors on the integration of sex education in the curriculum, as well as the lack of sufficient materials and facilities in schools. The insufficiency of CSE is also considered as one of the reasons for the increasing incidence of teenage pregnancy in the country, although there is lack of data to associate the two.

On global issues, Filipino Grade 5 learners generally showed such as on what is happening in countries near the Philippines. They also expressed a high level of agreement that it was the government's role to protect the environment. However, the proportion of Grade 5 students in the Philippines who were concerned about the different environmental sustainability issues was lower than the average of the SEA-PLM participating countries.

On environmental issues, Philippines remains susceptible to climate change impacts, primarily due to its geographic location. As a result, the Philippines is prone to natural hazards such as typhoons, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. According to DepEd data, 43,810 public schools in the country experienced natural hazards at least once between School Year 2009-2010 to 2017-2018. Typhoon Rai, locally known as Super Typhoon Odette, that hit the Philippines in December 2021 affected 29,671 schools in 11 regions, putting 711,360 children in need of education in emergency support. These data provide strong evidence that young people all over the country are experiencing the impacts of climate change and remain to be the one of the most vulnerable sectors to climate change because of their physical, cognitive, and physiological immaturity. Moreover, intensified weather conditions such as typhoons and droughts, together with adverse environmental conditions impose risk to young people's physical, mental, social, and emotional development.

## Strategies

Although there may be short co-curricular activities in schools such as celebrating the United Nations Day, DepEd is yet to concretize an overarching policy framework of global citizenship. Global citizenship education should not be limited to civics or social studies classes alone. It should be strategically integrated in all subject areas (e.g., learning about climate change through literature, understanding human rights, equality, and social justice in social studies classes, or demonstrating sustainable development in mathematics classes). Through these courses, students may develop the confidence to build their ideas, speak up their opinions, and take action. Moreover, materials on global citizenship education should be available in Filipino and other local languages.

Upon the enactment of RA 10354, the country was mandated to provide age-and development-appropriate reproductive health education to adolescents by adequately trained teachers. Towards this end, CSE was implemented by DepEd to enable the learners to develop into responsible adolescents capable of making rational decisions based on adequate information and better understanding of reproductive health.

DepEd likewise forged partnership with the Department of Health (DOH) and Commission on Population and Development (POPCOM) to launch the Comprehensive and Adolescent Reproductive Health (CSE-ASRH) Convergence, a whole-of-government response to reproductive health issues among the youth. This collaboration among different sectors from the government, and even civil societies must be continued to spread proper sex education especially among rural areas with different ethnicities and religious affiliations.

Proper implementation of the CSE is called to serve its purpose. Schools must be provided with updated and sufficient learning materials and facilities to better discuss this subject matter. Teachers must be provided with relevant training for them to effectively deliver age-appropriate sex-education.

In addition to ongoing efforts in improving knowledge and awareness on sexual and reproductive health, some teachers also mentioned during the grassroot consultation that some learners in SHS who have already built their own families, give advice to their classmates on challenges they encountered in parenthood. These kinds of conversations on responsible parenthood and sex education should be encouraged to prevent teenage pregnancies.

## Target 4.a: Inclusive and Safe Schools

Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

**While a large share of public elementary to senior high schools are equipped with electricity and basic handwashing facilities, access to the internet and basic drinking water are still limited.**

- 4.a.1: Proportion of schools offering basic services, by type of service

In terms of **access to electricity**, annually, school electrification is included in the GAA, as a component of the Basic Education Facilities Fund. Through this, a newly constructed classroom package connection to the electrical system is provided to schools. Its coverage includes schools without electricity to ensure that all schools, on or off-grid, are connected and energized to modernized electrical systems.

In 2019, DepEd launched the Last Mile School program. One of its objectives is to provide electricity through the installation of solar panels, especially to off-grid schools, and ensure that no learner is left behind and no area is underdeveloped to make education accessible to all.

With all these undertakings, almost all public elementary to senior high schools have been successfully provided with access to electricity. The significant progress is seen in senior high school where the share of schools with access to electricity increased from 73% to 93% between 2016 and 2022.

With regard to **computers and access to the internet**, DepEd launched the Computerization Program in 2010 to provide public schools with appropriate technologies to enhance the teaching-learning process and meet the challenges of the 21st century. This program focuses on the provision of hardware and software and training on simple troubleshooting. Learners are provided with tablets or laptops that can be used to access online and offline e-learning resources.

In 2020, DepEd established the Digital Rise Program to address the infrastructure, software, and capacity building of learners and teachers in technology, as an effort towards bridging the digital divide and achieving DepEd's Sulong Edukalidad to improve the quality of education. Under this initiative, DepEd aims to provide teachers with equipment, software content, and skills for their daily classroom teaching. The program also envisions providing laptops that contain e-learning resources for teachers to use in their classes.

Although numerous programs have been initiated by DepEd, access to the internet is still limited in public schools. Despite the increasing trend in the last few years, less than 50% of public elementary to senior high schools were connected to the internet in 2020.

With the issuance of DepEd Order No. 10, s. 2016, DepEd expresses its commitment to provide **basic handwashing facilities, basic drinking water, and single-sex basic sanitation facilities** for all learners. DepEd Memorandum No. 194 series of 2018 formally adopted the Philippines WASH in Schools Three Star Approach (WinS TSA) as the national strategy to attain the objectives of the National WASH in Schools Policy. The WinS TSA provides an incremental approach to schools for WinS improvement towards reaching the DepEd standards in the WinS Policy. Under this approach, schools integrate WinS in school planning and implement local actions to move from Zero Star to One Star. Subsequent resource mobilization and investments in additional facilities and services move the schools to Two Star and Three Star levels. The TSA applies School-Based Management (SBM) as a pathway for schools and stakeholders to take local action toward improving and sustaining WASH services. The institution of the WinS indicates also that more and more schools are managing the financial aspects of WinS as expressed by the inclusion of WASH into regular planning and budgeting processes.

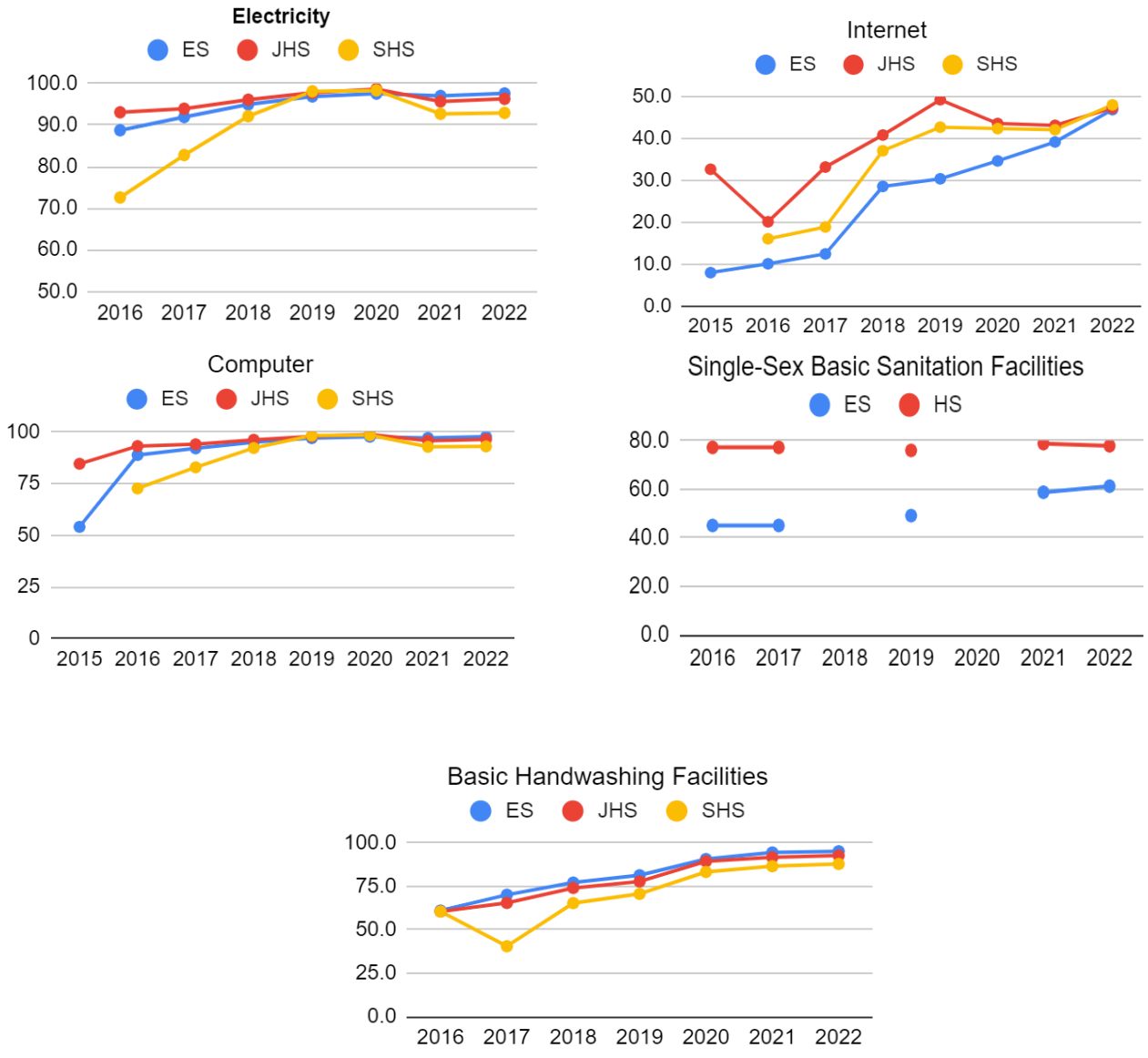
An increasing proportion of schools have been offering basic handwashing facilities in recent years. In 2016, about 60% of elementary to senior high schools had basic handwashing facilities. In 2020, almost 80-90% of schools in these education levels offered decent hand wash facilities.

An increasing share of schools has been equipped with basic drinking water in recent years. However, access to basic drinking water at school is still limited. The share of public elementary to senior high schools with basic drinking water remains below 40%.

Despite a slight increase from 45% in 2016, only 49% of elementary schools set up single-sex basic sanitation facilities. On the contrary, about 76-77% of senior high schools continued to offer the facilities in the last years.

The provision of education facilities is one of the targets where the Philippines is least lagging behind. Considerable efforts have been made, but additional efforts are still needed, as the projected value of education facilities in 2030 is expected to be 24.5 points behind the target, if only the current efforts will be sustained.

**Figure 24:** Proportion of public schools offering basic services, 2015-2022




*Source: Key Basic Education Statistics (DepEd LIS/BEIS)*

## More than 60% of children and adolescents in elementary and junior high schools experienced bullying.

- 4.a.2: Percentage of students experiencing bullying in the last 12 months in a) primary, and b) lower secondary education
- 4.a.3: Number of attacks on students, personnel and institutions

According to SEA-PLM, 63% of Grade 5 students in the Philippines experienced bullying at least once a month, which is the highest figure among six (6) countries in Southeast Asia (*see Figure 25*). Data from PISA 2018 also suggests that 65% of 15-year-old Filipino students experienced bullying at least a few times a month. Evidence from SEA-PLM finds that bullying is more prevalent and happens daily in high-performing schools in reading, writing, and mathematics assessments in the Philippines, implying that bullying is possibly induced by academic competition.[53]

In terms of other forms of violence at school, 39% of Grade 5 learners in the Philippines were exposed to vandalism at least monthly and 29% offensive behavior toward female learners, teachers, and people with disabilities.

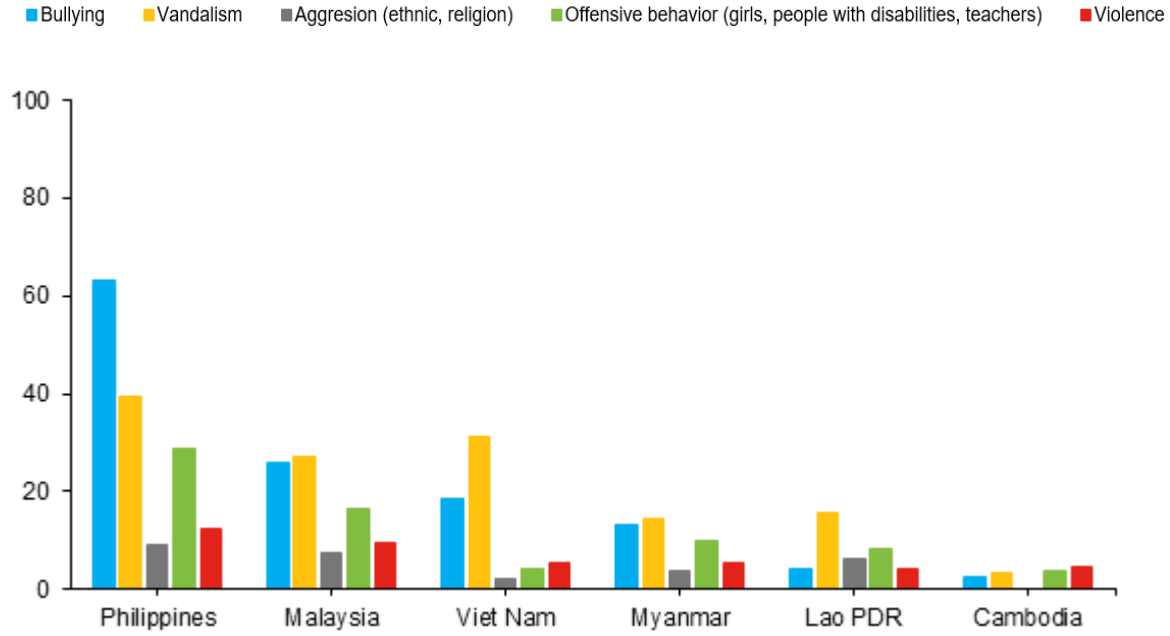
DepEd issued DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 or the Child Protection Policy which affords protection to learners from bullying, abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, and other forms of abuse. This policy also directed the establishment of Child Protection Committees in all public and private schools which shall draft their school child protection policy, identify, refer, and if appropriate report to the appropriate offices cases involving child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying.

Moreover, the Implementating Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013 (DepEd Order No. 55, s. 2013) also provides the adoption of Anti-Bullying Policies in schools to address the existence of bullying in their respective institutions. It also defines prohibited acts related to bullying, mechanisms and procedures in handling bullying incidents, and the implementation of prevention and intervention programs. In connection to preventing violence and harassment in schools, the Republic Act No. 11313, also known as Safe Space Act was issued wherein every school must adopt and publish grievance procedures to facilitate the filing of complaints by students and faculty members related to gender-based sexual harassment or sexual violence.

Further, under DepEd Order No, 10, s. 2018 or the WinS Policy, toilets must be located within sight of passerby which is significant not only in preventing bullying, but also acts as a deterrent against other forms of risky behavior such as smoking, substance abuse, and sexual harassment, among others.

[53] Department of Education and UNICEF, *Philippines SEA-PLM 2019 Supplementary Report: An Analysis of Contextual Variables*, 2021.

**Figure 25:** Share of Grade 5 students exposed to different forms of violence at school at least once a month among SEA-PLM participating countries, 2019




*Source: Adapted from What does SEA-PLM 2019 tell us about child well-being and learning in six Southeast Asian countries?*

- 4.a.3: Number of attacks on students, personnel, and institutions

To protect students, teachers, and school personnel from attacks, the DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2019 or the National Policy Framework on Learners and Schools as Zones of Peace was issued to outline the overall strategy for ensuring the safety and security of learners, personnel, and schools, the continuity of education in situations of armed conflict, and the contributions of education and schools to peacebuilding. It institutionalizes conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding, and community engagement into education interventions, to prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from armed and violent conflict.

In adherence to international and domestic laws, the policy also declares that learners shall not be the object of an attack and shall be entitled to special respect, and protected from any form of threat, assault, torture or other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatments. Notably, the school as a zone of peace was defined to be free from the presence of armed combatants, whether they be from the government forces or armed groups. It reiterates the guaranteed special protection to schools under the International Humanitarian Law in which they shall be treated as civilian objects and not be targets of any form of attacks.

## Key Challenges

Teachers' pedagogical approaches and interactions with students may also be influenced by the availability of access to electricity, computers, and internet, which can help improve student learning outcomes via digital learning. Digital technologies in education have a potential as an equalizer for learning opportunities by facilitating

individualized learning, where students at different learning levels can progress towards the mastery of foundational skills at their own pace. Despite progress in access to electricity, computers, and internet, it is expected that the country will need the total costs of 171 million USD to achieve universal digital learning by 2030.[54]

The WinS TSA has enabled the agencies of schools to take local action to improve the WinS conditions. It has also allowed division and regional offices to pay attention to and manage WinS implementation more effectively. However, many schools, particularly in resource-scarce and underserved areas, are unable to progress into One Star. This is seen in data where less than 40% of elementary to senior high schools were equipped with basic drinking water in 2020 and less than 50% of elementary schools with single-sex basic sanitation facilities in 2019. The situation points to the need for increased direct investments in WinS infrastructure and community/municipal level services (e.g., water supply, septage management, solid waste management).

Moreover, sustainability of investments in WinS facilities is undermined by a centralized approach to infrastructure development and the vulnerability to the impacts of natural and man-made disasters. The one-size-fits-all toilet designs that are drawn up at the national level are not contextualized to local conditions of the schools. This points to the need for a decentralized approach to infrastructure development that allows schools to receive funds specific to WinS and plan, design and manage implementation.

National calamities and armed conflict have also destroyed toilets, handwashing facilities and water systems, which often setback schools in their WinS progress. Rebuilding of these facilities is constrained by prevailing mindset at the sub-national level that Wins facilities are not covered by national budgets for repair and rehabilitation. This also points to the need for climate-resilient facilities and services, both at school and municipal levels.

Bullying is another significant issue that has a long-term detrimental effect on children's mental health and academic performance. Data show that the Philippines has a high incidence of bullying in school. To respond to the challenges, the existing Child Protection Policy has directed schools to establish the Child Protection Committee. However, the hiring of Registered Guidance Counselors who can provide psychosocial support to the bully and the victims remains a persisting problem of DepEd. This may be caused by the relatively low salary despite the high qualification standards for guidance counselors. With the insufficiency of available Registered Guidance Counselors, learner's access to psycho-social and mental health services from professionals may be limited. Further, considering the wide exposure of learners to social media and the internet, DepEd may also need to consider integrating in the curriculum topics on cyberbullying, data privacy and security, cybersafe, and ethical concerns in utilizing these tools.

[54] UNICEF Philippines, *Support Multigrade Schools with Digital Technology: Learning recovery from Typhoon Odette in the Philippines*, 2023, https://www.unicef.org/philippines/media/7366/file/Policy%20brief.pdf

## Strategies

The Philippines will increasingly focus on learning and teaching with technology in the next few years. In the Basic Education Development Plan 2030, DepEd expresses that it will sustain school experience with blended learning and continue to strengthen its capacity to maximize returns from blended and online learning. Investment case analysis for scale-up of digital learning is also suggested as one of the topics in the future policy and research agenda, as the government of the Philippines made a commitment to fostering digital learning in the Transforming Education Summit in 2022. It envisions securing access to digital devices and platforms for learners and teachers to ensure inclusive and equitable digital learning for all. It is also articulated in the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 that the government will support teachers to improve pedagogical competencies including the use of digital learning platforms. As electricity, computers, and the internet have fundamental roles in advancing digital learning, it is essential for the government to ensure schools have access to these technologies.

Availability of safe drinking water and functional toilets shall also be one of the priorities of the Philippines, as these are essential to maintain the health and wellbeing of the learners and to avoid the potential spread of diseases within schools. Evidently, the WinS Online Monitoring System established in 2016 and the WinS TSA have increased inclusion of WASH in the planning and budgeting process of schools which needs to be sustained overtime to ensure data driven bases for policymaking and in prioritizing schools that need WinS infrastructure investment. It is also recommended that DepEd work with other government agencies in establishing separate financial fundings for repairs and maintenance of existing WASH facilities. Tapping LGUs and rallying support from organizations and partners for the construction of WASH facilities in schools particularly to those who are not able to meet the One Star Approach may be an option to address the gaps.

Moreover, DepEd must identify and consider schools situated in areas with difficulty to or no way of access to water to at least provide them with alternative water sources. Meanwhile, proper training and technical assistance to schools in resource scarce areas for the proper collection, storage, and utilization of rain catchment system must be provided to teachers and school leaders to at least have available water for cleaning.

Lastly, collaboration with the local health offices also should be strengthened to ensure that water analysis or testing be made free for requesting schools. The WinS Seal of Recognition may be a good mechanism in sustaining the gains of schools in achieving the standards.

## WinS Initiatives

WinS Online Monitoring System. To support the implementation of the TSA, DepED developed in 2016 the WinS Online Monitoring System (OMS) to help schools and divisions office in planning, programming and monitoring the progress of WinS implementation. The OMS processes data from the school-level WinS assessment and

generates charts and tables to aid school level planning and monitoring. Aggregations of the school WinS data at the division and regional levels allow sub-national education managers to track progress, determine gaps and deliver corresponding technical assistance to schools.

**Recognition of improvement and exemplary performance. To motivate and recognize performance among schools and sub-national offices, the Wins TSA includes a performance assessment and recognition system.** Recently, BLSS-SHD awarded 38 schools from different regions with the Wins Seal of Excellence (SOE) for schools that have been able to achieve and sustain their Three Star status for three (3) consecutive school years (SYs 2017-2018 to 2019-2020 for this first batch of awardees). The SOE is part of the Wins recognition system, which also includes awards for schools that improve their star status and those that attain the

**Orientations, massive open online courses, and learning exchanges.** The Bureau of Learner Support Services - Schools Health Division (BLSS-SHD) and partners in the National WASH in Schools Technical Working Group have conducted a series of orientations both at the national and sub-national levels on the WinS Policy, the TSA and the implementation process to build capacity among teachers, school administrators, division managers and regional supervisors. In 2018, DepED conducted the National WASH in Schools Learning Exchange, which brought together regional and division WinS technical working groups to learn from each other and showcase good practices. Since then, the BLSS-SHD and WinS TWG partners have conducted workshops and mid-year and year-end forums for continuous learning of WinS implementers.

**Development of resource materials and behavior change tools.** The BLSS-SHD and the WinS TWG have facilitated the development of resource materials and behavior change tools to support implementation. Recently formally released (but used already for several years in orientations and capacity-building) are two WinS management handbooks, namely: (1) "Steering WinS: Management Handbooks for Regional Offices" and (2) "WinS Management Handbook for Schools Division Offices". There are four (4) booklets that provide technical solutions for implementing the different WinS components – Water, Sanitation, Hygiene (including menstrual hygiene management [MHM]) and deworming. These and other materials are available on the DepEd WinS Website: WASH In Schools | Ensuring WASH to Enable Learning (wins.deped.gov.ph)

To address bullying and violence in schools, the current administration commits to ensuring that all learners have access to relevant guidance and psycho-social services managed and delivered by mental health professionals. This will include working with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to obtain higher salary for guidance counselors and to propose the creation of additional items that will focus on providing learner support services.

Adoptions of child protection and anti-bullying policies including the establishment of a Child Protection Committee in schools are in place. During the COVID-19 pandemic, DepEd launched the mental health helpline system consisting of contact information of organizations to support learners, teachers, and the public in times of mental and

psychological distress. In addition, thousands of DepEd personnel were trained on child rights including child protection through a webinar series recognized by the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP).

The Learner Rights and Protection Office (LRPO) also has a Learners TeleSafe Contact Center Helpline where anyone can submit a complaint, query, follow-up, or feedback related to bullying, abuses, discrimination, and abuses.

## Target 4.b: Higher Education Scholarships

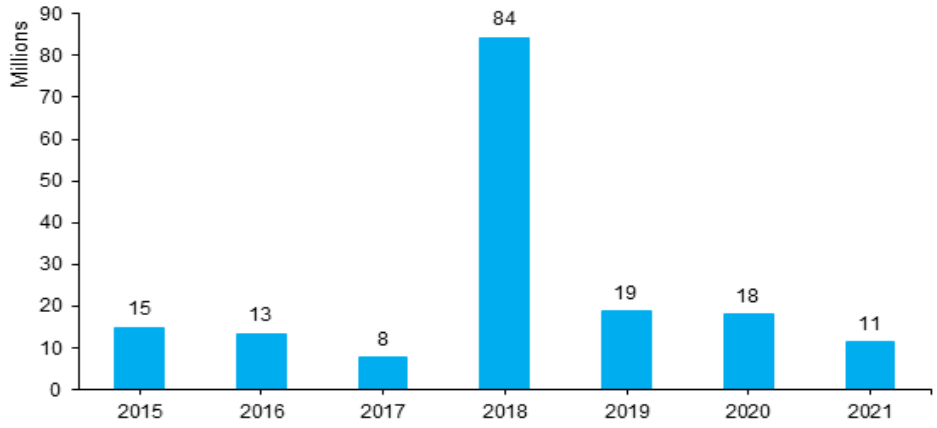
By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrollment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries

**The Philippines received the largest volume of scholarship aid in the Asia-Pacific region in 2018.**

- 4.b.1: Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study

The volume of official development assistance (ODA) for scholarships steadily decreased from 2015 to 2017 (*see Figure 26*). However, the Philippines received 84 million USD of scholarship aid in 2018, which is the largest volume in the region then, followed by Indonesia (55 million USD), Viet Nam (31 million USD), China (23 million USD) and India (20 million USD).[55] Despite the sudden increase in 2018, the volume experienced a steady decrease over the last few years. In 2021, the Philippines received around 11 million USD of ODA for scholarships.

**Figure 26:** Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships to the Philippines (in constant USD), 2015-2021

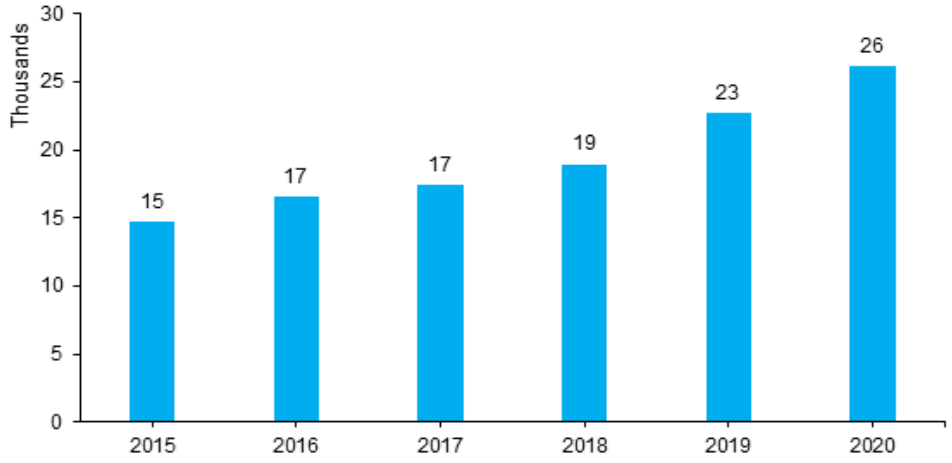



*Source: UIS data center, accessed in May 2023*

[55] UNESCO, *5-Year Progress Review of SDG 4 - Education 2030 in Asia-Pacific,* 2021, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379173

Despite the decreasing trend in scholarship aid, the number of Filipino students in tertiary education studying abroad has been on the increase since 2015 (*see Figure 27*). While 15 thousand tertiary students studied in foreign countries, the figure increased to 26 thousand in 2020. The most popular destination for Filipino tertiary students to study abroad is Australia (10 thousand), followed by the United States (3.4 thousand), and Canada (2.8 thousand).[56]

**Figure 27:** Number of outbound internationally mobile tertiary students from the Philippines studying abroad, 2015-2020




Source: UIS data center, accessed in May 2023

## Strategies

The DOST-SEI implements the following undergraduate scholarship programs:

1. Merit Scholarship Program, formerly known as the Undergraduate Scientific Manpower Development Program (USMDP) or Project 5801 Ed. originated from the "Science Talent Search," which begun in 1958. The objective of the program is to identify, develop and nurture students with high aptitude in science and mathematics.
2. Science and Technology Scholarship Act of 1994 (Republic Act 7687) finances the education of poor, talented and deserving students desiring to pursue careers in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) including science teaching.
3. Republic Act 10612 otherwise known as the "Fast-Tracked S & T Scholarship Act of 2013," is designed to strengthen the country's science and technology education by fast-tracking graduates in STEM courses who shall teach STEM subjects in secondary schools throughout the country. Unlike the two previous scholarship programs which are open to incoming college students, RA 10612 is available to talented and deserving third year college students pursuing degrees in the priority areas of science and technology.

[56] UNESCO Institute of Statistics, "*Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Student*", http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow

## Target 4.c: Teachers

By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States

**All teachers from kindergarten to senior high school obtain the minimum required qualifications to teach in the classroom.**

- 4.c.1: Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, by education level]

Teachers are required to have at least a four-year bachelor's degree: primary school teachers should have at least a Bachelor of Elementary Education, while high school teachers have a Bachelor of Secondary Education (David et al. 2018a). Both of these college programs encompass general education courses, education-related subjects, subject specialization, and practical teaching components. Individuals holding a bachelor's degree in other fields can also meet the qualifications to become a teacher by successfully completing a post-graduate program in Education, commonly referred to as a Certificate of Professional Education. In addition, Republic Act 7836, which was passed in 1994, makes it mandatory for students to first pass the Licensure Exam for Teachers (LET). Once hired by the government, teachers are provided professional development, especially through training activities conducted between school sessions.

- 4.c.3: Percentage of teachers qualified according to national standards by education level and type of institution

**Table 6**. Number of TVET Trainers from 2015 to 2022

| Year | Number of TVET Trainer |
|---|---|
| 2015 | 10,428 |
| 2016 | 10,029 |
| 2017 | 11,159 |
| 2018 | 10,118 |
| 2019 | 10,855 |
| 2020 | 4,023 |
| 2021 | 7,746 |
| 2022 | 9,351 |
| Total | 73,709 |

The table above shows the number of TVET trainers from 2015 to 2022. During this period, there were a total of 73,709 TVET trainers. Notably, 2017 is the year with the

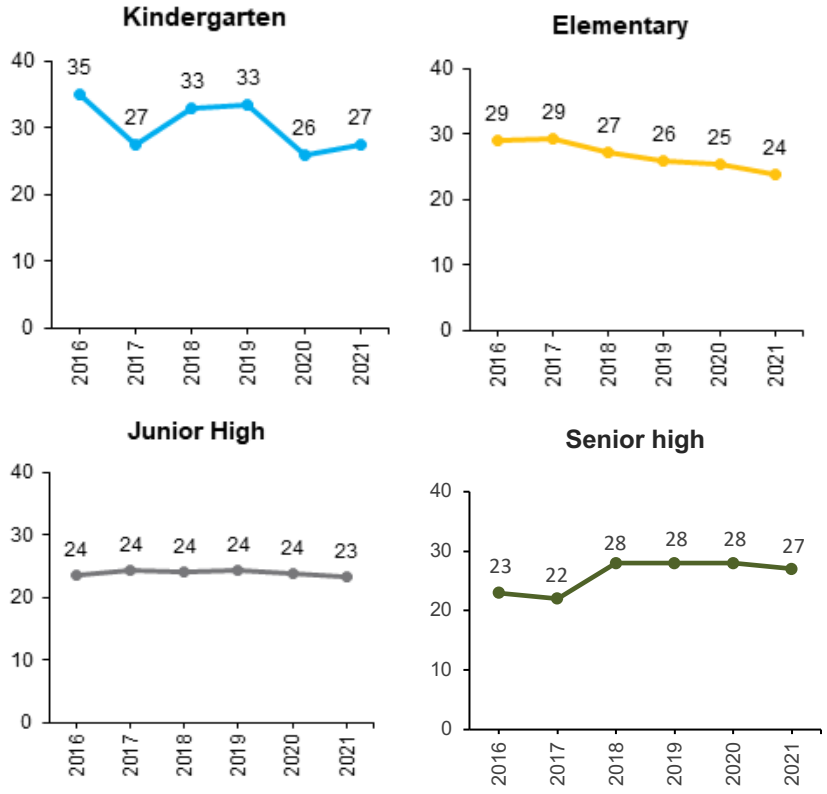
highest number of TVET trainers, with 11,159 trainers. On the other hand, the year with the lowest number of TVET trainers is 2020, with 4,023 trainers. The COVID-19 pandemic may have led to disruptions in TVET programs, such as closures or reduced enrollment, which could have resulted in a decrease in the demand for trainers.

- 4.c.4: Pupil-qualified teacher ratio by education level

In the Philippines, teacher candidates must earn a four-year degree diploma and pass the Board Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (BLEPT) to be eligible to teach in public schools. Due to this requirement, 100% of teachers from kindergarten to senior high school in the public school system obtain the minimum required qualifications to teach in the classroom.

In kindergarten, the pupil-qualified teacher ratio decreased from 35:1 to 27:1 between 2016 and 2021 (*see Figure 28*). This means that one quality teacher taught 27 children in kindergarten in 2021. Similarly, the pupil-qualified teacher ratio in elementary school was 24:1 in 2021, compared to 29:1 in 2016. There were 24 students for every one quality teacher in elementary school in 2021. Unlike kindergarten and elementary school, the pupil-qualified teacher ratio did not change much in junior high school between 2016 and 2021. In 2021, the pupil-qualified teacher in junior high school stood at 23:1. In senior high school, the pupil-qualified teacher ratio slightly increased from 23:1 in 2016 to 27:1 in 2021.

**Figure 28:** Pupil-qualified teacher ratio from kindergarten to senior high school, 2016-2021




*Source: DepEd*

Less than half of Grade 5 teachers received in-service training in reading, writing, and mathematics in their teaching career.

- 4.c.5 Average teacher salary relative to other professions requiring a comparable level of qualifications

The October 2020 Labor Force Survey by the PSA, as cited by the PIDS (2023), indicates that teachers earn an average monthly wage of PhP 22,074, nearly double the median wage of salary workers. The Salary Standardization Law of 2019 increases the salaries for public school teachers in four tranches from 2020 to 2023. Teacher I salaries increased from P22,316 in 2020 to P27,000 in 2023. This increase widen the wage gap between public and private school teachers.

- 4.c.2: Pupil-trained teacher ratio by education level
- 4.c.7: Percentage of teachers who received in-service training in the last 12 months by type of training

Pre-service teacher preparation alone does not necessarily equip teachers with sufficient knowledge and skills to teach in the classroom. To fill the weakness of pre-service training, the reskilling and upskilling of teachers are a key component of Sulong Edukalidad, which is a nationwide initiative formulated in 2019 to improve the quality of education.

According to SEA-PLM, on average, less than half of Grade 5 teachers received in-service training in reading (41%), writing (33%), and mathematics (34%) in their teaching career (*see Table 7*). In-service training opportunities are more limited for the early career teachers. About 6% of teachers with less than two (2) years of experience had in-service training in writing, 14% in mathematics and 17% in reading. However, teachers are likely to receive in-service training in foundational skills throughout their teaching career. While 6% of teachers with less than two years of teaching experience received in-service training in writing, the figure is 41% for those with more than 20 years of service.

In other aspects of pedagogy, more than 50% of teachers were trained in differentiated instruction during their two (2) to five years (5) of service. However, there are other aspects of pedagogy such as inclusive education, for which in-service training is still limited; less than 35% of teachers with more than 20 years of experience have undergone in-service training in inclusive education. Furthermore, although the role of ICT in education has been amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic, on average, less than 40% of Grade 5 teachers received in-service training on the use of ICT in the classroom in 2019.

**Table 7:** Percentage of Grade 5 teachers who received in-service training by subjects and pedagogical aspects and years of teaching experience, 2019

| Years of teaching experience | Reading | Writing | Mathematics | Inclusive Education | Differentiated Instruction | Student Assessment | Classroom Management | ICT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| < 2 years | 17 | 6 | 14 | 5 | 17 | 20 | 22 | 13 |
| 2–5 years | 40 | 32 | 29 | 18 | 55 | 42 | 38 | 34 |
| 6–10 years | 38 | 32 | 28 | 23 | 48 | 43 | 43 | 32 |
| 11–20 years | 46 | 38 | 40 | 29 | 51 | 47 | 49 | 46 |
| 20 years < | 47 | 41 | 41 | 35 | 51 | 45 | 49 | 49 |
| Average | 41 | 33 | 34 | 24 | 47 | 42 | 43 | 39 |

*Source: SEA-PLM 2019*

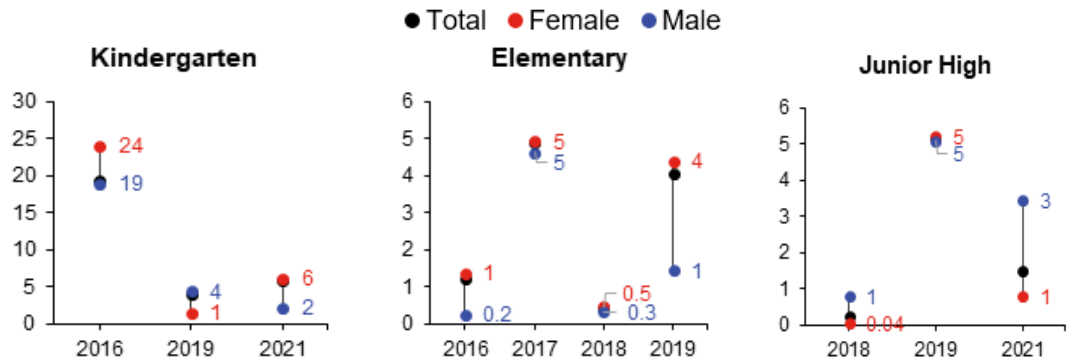
**Female teachers are more likely to leave the teaching profession than male teachers.**

- 4.c.6: Teacher attrition rate by education level

Teacher attrition rates that cover both public and private schools have fluctuated by level of education over the last years. In kindergarten, the rate was 19% in 2016 (*see Figure 29*). However, it decreased to 6% in 2021. In elementary school, the rate increased from 1% to 4% between 2016 and 2019. In junior high school, while only 0.2% of teachers left the teaching profession in 2018, the figure increased to 1% in 2021.

In general, female teachers are more likely to leave the profession than male teachers. In kindergarten, 6% of female teachers left the teaching force in 2021, compared to 2% of male teachers. Similarly, in elementary school, the attrition rate for female teachers was 4% in 2019, while the figure was 1% for male teachers. On the other hand, in junior high school, the attrition rate was higher for male teachers, which was 3%, in 2021, than for female teachers (1%). In senior high school, 65% of female teachers and 37% of male teachers left the job in 2017.

**Figure 29:** Teacher attrition rates from kindergarten to junior high school, 2016-2021




*Source: DepEd Note: Data for senior high school are excluded from the analysis. Senior high school program was introduced in School Year 2016-2017 and does not have solid baseline data.*

## Key Challenges

Recognizing the importance of quality teachers, DepEd needs to address problems with the quality of entry-level teachers, as well as the ability to hire and deploy teachers based on current immediate needs. Questions on mismatches with specialization needs persist. These issues put pressure on DepEd's ability to implement demand-driven In-Service training (INSET) for teachers and enforced a continuing professional development program for all teachers.

Also, the multiple roles of teachers adversely affect the delivery of quality services and their welfare. Due to the insufficiency of administrative staff in schools, teachers are engaged to perform ancillary or administrative tasks. This results in the overload or excessive load of teachers.

On the retention of teachers, there is a challenge in retaining experienced teachers in the Last Mile Schools, multigrade, and hardship post schools. Usually, teachers deployed in these areas are new recruits from the local population, but once given enough experience, a request for transfer is raised, which eventually results in a cycle.

Lastly, the discrepancy between the remuneration of private and public school teachers adversely affects the retention of experienced teachers in the private education sector. Particularly, public school teachers earn higher and have more non-wage benefits than their counterparts in the private sector. The former Secretary Briones estimates a 71% difference between the average monthly salaries of teachers in public and private schools in 2016. With this, a number of private school teachers opt to transfer to public schools.

## Strategies

Pre-service training determines the quality of new teachers. Pre-service training is provided at teacher education institutions which are governed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). However, DepEd still has a strong influence on the teacher education curriculum. It is recommended to have regular consultations among the Teacher Education Council (TEC), CHED, and DepEd curriculum planners to ensure teacher education programs properly reflect the school curriculum. In addition to foundational skills in literacy and numeracy, the 21st century skills of problem solving, information literacy, and critical thinking should be embedded in the teacher education curriculum. Moreover, pre-service training should be closely linked to school practices. To achieve this, pre-service training programs could strengthen practicum training so that teacher candidates are exposed to the full scope of school activities before becoming a teacher.

The Philippine Government, by virtue of Republic Act 1173 otherwise known as "Excellence in Teacher Education Act" which was adopted in April 2022, reinforces its thrust to enhance the quality education and training of teachers. The TEC is also mandated to strengthen the link between pre-service and in-service teacher education

programs by collaborating with relevant government agencies and stakeholders, including the National Educators' Academy of the Philippines (NEAP).

In-service training plays a key role in ensuring that teachers have sufficient competencies to teach in the classroom. It is critical to establish systematic and robust teacher professional development programs beyond one-off training initiatives, in which the content reflects the need for subject-matter and pedagogical reskilling and upskilling and a standardized quality of training. In this sense, DepEd's initiative to transform the NEAP could play a key role in enhancing professional development programs for teachers. Also, peer-to-peer learning in Learning Action Cells (LAC), which is implemented as a national policy as a school-based continuous professional development strategy for teachers, should be invested in so that teachers can share knowledge and critically reflect curriculum and classroom practices with each other as in-service learning sessions. Moreover, it is crucial to strengthen the instructional leadership of school principals to guide and mentor teachers through in-service coaching, while fostering a trusting and respecting environment within schools.

To free up public school teachers of ancillary or administrative tasks, DepEd coordinates with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) for the creation and hiring of administrative staff for public schools. In the interim, DepEd establishes systems to provide service credits and overload pay to teachers with excess load.

Lastly, DepEd assesses how to reinforce non-wage benefits to teachers deployed in the Last Mile Schools, multigrade, and hardship post schools such as Special Hardship Allowance. For private school teachers, the implementation of the Teacher Salary Subsidy (TSS) shall be reviewed for the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education to reinforce support to private school teachers.

### The provision of a special hardship allowance for public school teachers

Imbalances in the distribution of teachers may be attributed to various factors. For instance, teachers might be reluctant to work in challenging areas due to the shortage of basic infrastructure, poor accessibility, and safety concerns. To recruit, retain, and encourage teachers to work in hard-to-reach areas, DepEd initiated the provision of a special hardship allowance for public school teachers under Republic Act No. 4670 in 1966. Teachers who are exposed to hardship, such as difficulty in commuting in hard-to-reach, far-flung stations, and other hazards peculiar to the workplace, may receive additional compensation.

To respond to the need to update the special hardship allowance, UNICEF Philippines supported the conduct of a study via the Data Must Speak initiative to generate evidence from the identification of recipients to the actual payment of allowance. In 2021, DepEd released a hardship index in DepEd Order No. 039, s. 2021 to determine the levels of special allowances for teachers working in the most challenging areas.

The revised policy on Special Hardship Allowance (DepEd Order No. 017, s. 2023) led to the 53% increase in the number of hardship posts from 3,446 to 5,258. This expansion was also coupled with an increase of 1.6 billion pesos from the baseline of

2.1 billion pesos in 2016. Moreover, the budget utilization rate also improved from 69% in 2020 to over 90% in 2022 because of the simplified process introduced in availing the Special Hardship Allowance.

The DOST-SEI implements various capacity building programs for teachers and develops learning materials for use in teaching such as:

1. Republic Act 10612 or the "Fast-tracked Science and Technology Scholarship Act of 2013". The Act shall strengthen the country's science and technology education by fast-tracking graduates in the sciences, mathematics, and engineering who shall teach science and mathematics subjects in secondary schools throughout the country. The DOST-SEI provides scholarships to finance the education of talented and deserving students in their third year of college, and pursuing a degree in the areas of science and technology. The Department of Education (DepEd), on the other hands, ensures job placement and hiring of qualified graduates under this program as secondary school teachers in science, mathematics and related technology courses.

2. Capacity Building Program in Science and Mathematics Education (CBPSME). Through the CBPSME, DOST and DepEd collectively recognize the need to enable qualified teaching and non-teaching personnel in public secondary schools to avail of the DOST-SEI graduate scholarship program as a means of uplifting the status of education in the country.

3. Science Teachers Academy for the Regions (STAR). The program aims to enhance STEM education and to empower science and mathematics teachers by providing high-impact training to as many teachers as possible all over the country.

4. The DOST Courseware is a locally-produced, all-original Filipino highly interactive multimedia educational resource packages available both in Windows and Android versions. Spearheaded by the DOST, it was conceptualized, digitized and produced in partnership with the Advanced Science and Technology Institute (ASTI-DOST) and in cooperation with the DepEd, Philippine Normal University (PNU) and University of the Philippines-National Institute for Science and Mathematics Education (UP-NISMED), and its primary goal is to develop information and communication technology learning innovation to support the upgrading and improvement of science and mathematics education in the country. The DOST Courseware is provided for free to schools and is also made available online as supplemental resources for teachers and students as an interactive approach to e-learning and blended learning.

# CHAPTER 4
# Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Progress of SDG 4

This chapter will discuss the impact of the pandemic in terms of access, learning outcomes, and wellbeing. It highlights lessons learned on the provision of remote learning and school reopening during COVID-19 pandemic that affect enrollment, retention, and dropout rates, learning loss, and health and socio-emotional well-being.

## *Impact of the pandemic in terms of access*

SDG Target 4.1, which calls on countries to ensure that "all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes" by 2030, is centered on universal access, participation, and completion of primary and secondary education.

To ensure access to ECCD programs during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ECCD issued Advisory #2 Series of 2020 which include the Learning Continuity Plan for children due to closure and indefinite schedule of re-opening of centers. It also mandated the conduct of Regional Forum on Center-based Program implemented in Alternative Venues (CBPAV) to orient Child Development Workers (CDWs) and Teachers (CDTs) on CBPAV, particular to parent/family involvement in their child's assessment, planning/modification of weekly plan of activities, implementation and evaluation at home through weekly parents' sessions in CDCs or alternative venues.

The ECCD Council also issued Advisory #4 Series of 2021 to provide guidelines for the conduct of ECCD programs. It recommended the CBPAV as alternative learning delivery in times of emergencies including health outbreak/crisis. Other learning deliveries were implemented in LGUs such as the home-based program and modular approach.

To assess the Implementation of CBPAV, the National Online Survey for Child Development Workers and Teachers (CDW/Ts) in the Philippines was conducted. According to the survey, 53% of the respondents implemented CBPAV. Of which, 81-89% of them conducted mapping and profiling of children, facilitated registration, and orientation to parents, 80% conducted assessment using the ECCD Checklist to identify child's present skills and immediate needs, 79% prepare weekly learning plans for parents' guide at home while 64% facilitate weekly parents' sessions to discuss implementation and evaluation of activities, and parent concerns.

10% of the respondents did not implement, which is linked with CDW/Ts challenge in the conduct of mapping, profiling and registration in early learning programs: no enrollees; parents' fear of their children contacting COVID; CDW/Ts were given office tasks and prioritized distribution of relief packs to families and assist in Social Amelioration Program.

For basic education, DepEd announced in the 2023 Basic Education Report [57] that there were around 28.4 million learners who enrolled in 44,931 public schools and 12,162 private schools nationwide. However, recovery in enrollment was limited only to public schools. A decline in enrollment figures of private schools was still continued to be

[57] Philippines, Office of the Vice President, *Basic Education Report 2023 Speech*, 2023, https://ovp.gov.ph/post/basic-education-report-2023-speech.

observed, leading to the termination of some private schools operations. From 2020 to 2022, over 1,600 private schools stopped operations. Moreover, the Basic Education Sector Analysis (BESA) revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant decrease in enrollment in private schools in 2020, across all levels. Currently, DepEd is responsible for almost 80% of schools nationwide, of which 79% are elementary schools. Evidently, there is a wide disparity between the number of elementary and secondary schools in the country. With such a disparity, inclusivity in education remains to be a concern.

## *Impact of the pandemic in terms of learning outcomes*

In 2022, the UN Transforming Education Summit (UN-TES) Philippine National Consultation Report[58] revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on learning, with many students experiencing learning loss. This is mainly due to the use of distance learning, which is perceived to be less effective compared to face-to-face instruction. Distance learning modality presented challenges to learning for learners, home learning facilitation for parents, and remote teaching for teachers. Other factors include economic challenges, which has led some learners to drop out of school to work.

According to the World Bank (2022), students who have been out of school for long periods of time are more likely to experience learning losses.[59] These learning losses can have a lasting impact on students' educational attainment and future prospects.

DepEd remains committed to addressing the low performance of its learners in international large-scale assessments (ISLAs) and national assessments, and the learning loss heightened by school closures and disruption brought about by theCOVID-19 pandemic.

## *Learning loss during the pandemic*

DepEd and the Assessment, Curriculum and Technology Research Center (ACTRC) conducted a learning loss study in 2023[60] to assess the learning gaps of Grades 6 and 10 learners in SY 2021-2022 in acquiring 21st Century Skills, namely, problem solving, critical thinking, and information literacy. The study revealed that for sampled Grade 6 learners, a significant learning loss was detected in Problem Solving and Critical Thinking, but not in Information Literacy. For sampled Grade 10 learners, a significant gain in the average scores is observed from 2018 to 2022 in Critical Thinking. However, there is no significant difference in the average scores that was found in Problem Solving and Information Literacy between 2018 and 2022 for Grade 10.

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[58] United Nations, *Transforming Education Summit 2022 Philippine National Consultation Report*, 2022, https://transformingeducationsummit.sdg4education2030.org/system/files/2022-09/Philippines_NC%20report-avec%20compression_0.pdf.

[59] World Bank, *COVID-19 school closures fueled big learning losses, especially for the disadvantaged, 2022,* https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/covid-19-school-closures-fueled-big-learning-losses-especially-disadvantaged.

[60] Kevin Carl Santos, Louie Cagasan, Karizza Bianca Loberiza and Julie Anne dela Cruz, *Measuring Learning Loss based on 21st Century Skills of Filipino Grades 6 and 10 Students during COVID-19 Pandemic* (Assessment, Curriculum, and Technology Research Centre, 2023).

**Figure 30:** Learning gaps of Grades 6 and 10 learners in SY 2021- 2022


*Source: ACTRC Learning Loss Study*

### *Impact of the pandemic in terms of well-being*

The UN-TES Philippine National Consultation Report also stressed out the impact of the pandemic in terms of learners' well-being. Mental health challenges made it difficult for some students to focus on their studies. Additionally, it was revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the nutrition and health of learners. This is due to several factors including the disruption of school meals programs, the increase in food insecurity, and the stress caused by the pandemic. Similarly, teachers have also been affected by the pandemic, with many reporting increased stress and workload.

According to the DepEd M&E report on the implementation of limited face-to-face classes prepared by its Planning Service in January 2022, evidence showed that some schools faced challenges on limited supply of health and safety essentials and insufficient training on psychological and mental health. As a result, some respondents reported feeling anxious and stressed about the risks from the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents were also concerned about the lack of support available to them if they became sick.

To respond to the needs of learners during the COVID-19 pandemic, the School-Based Feeding Program employed a community approach with barangay volunteers and parents getting food packs together with the learning modules.

## Lessons learned on the provision of remote learning during COVID-19

Although the pandemic brought a lot of challenges to the education system, there were various lessons learned by different stakeholders on the provision of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some examples of these are listed below.

### *Highlighting the Role of Technology*

In DepEd's BE-LCP,[61] it was underscored that the Department already saw the increasing role of technology in education. Moreover, it was highlighted that digital

[61] Philippines, Department of Education, *The Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan in the Times of COVID-19*, 2020, https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/DepEd_LCP_July3.pdf

solutions are essential in distance learning. Online platforms are regarded to be the most advanced because of their ability to facilitate various interactive and remote activities and carry a broad range of content to a virtually connected community.

Many governments around the world adopted an ICT-based approach to education, delivering lessons online. Globally, there was a perceived increase in e-learning, which involves teachers and students directly communicating, discussing, and participating in learning activities via electronic devices such as computers, laptops, tablets, or mobile phones.

However, there are major issues that will need to be addressed in the utilization of technology in education. One key issue is equity in terms of learners' access to technology, gadgets, and household support to learning. Learners without internet access at home can still utilize printed modules and textbooks for independent learning, however they will have limited opportunities for interaction with their teachers and classmates.

## *Emphasizing teacher training on remote learning delivery*

Teachers who had to switch to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic have faced modern challenges. With this, more emphasis should be placed on building their capacity to monitor learners remotely, engaging learners in online discussions, communicating with parents, and providing psycho-social support to learners[62] for the effective delivery of remote learning.

One of the critical components of MATATAG Agenda is to give support to teachers in improving their teaching strategies. In relation to the importance of technology in education, teachers would have to be trained in the use of technology for learning delivery. DepEd issued Memorandum No. 050, s. 2020[63] which provided professional development priorities for teachers and school leaders for the school year 2020-2023, which includes training programs in light of COVID-19 pandemic for the incoming school years. This is also one of the principles in the integration of inputs into the BE-LCP that DepEd shall ensure the provision of corresponding training for teachers and school leaders.

## *Redesigning the curriculum and learning delivery*

With the Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for School Year 2020-2021 in Light of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, one of its strategies is the adoption of the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) which allows instruction amid challenging circumstances to focus on the most essential learning, and to ease the requirements for adapting classroom-based learning resource for distance learning. As part of the BE-LCP, the different learning strategies and modalities were devised: distance learning; blended learning; homeschooling; modular distance learning (MDL); TV-radio based instruction; and online distance learning, for the

[62] Philippines, Department of Education, *Result from Learning Continuity and Safe School Operations (LCSSO) Survey* (n.d).
[63] Philippines, Department of Education, *DepEd Memorandum no. 50, s. 2020: Professional Development Priorities for Teachers and School Leaders for School Year 2020-2023*, 2020.

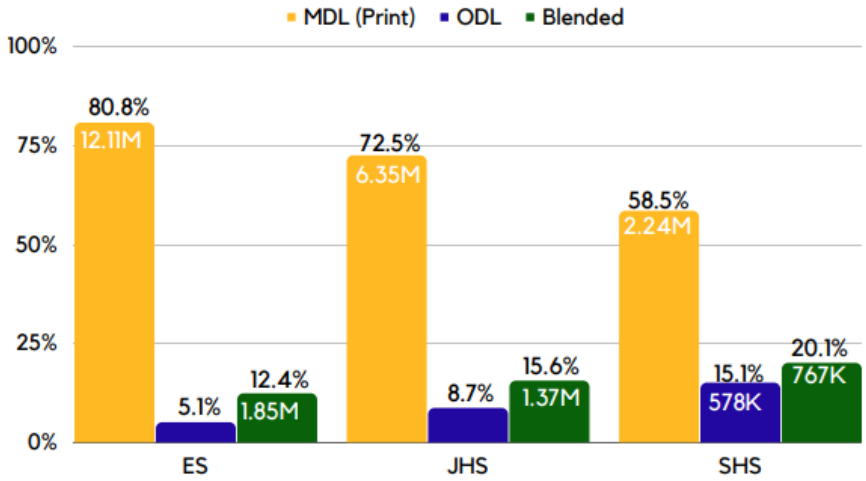
purpose of covering the essential requirements of education in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. These modalities adopted by the schools since SY 2020-2021 depended on the local COVID-19 pandemic situation and access to the learning platforms.

## *Keeping the learners engaged*

In the context of remote learning, providing self-study learning materials is necessary but not sufficient to ensure learning continuity.[64] Learners must be motivated and engaged for actual learning to occur. In consideration to this, learning tasks must be completed with a certain level of intensity, persistence, and quality participation.

During the pandemic, DepEd has ensured that learning delivery modalities are learner-friendly and encourage active participation. Online Distance Learning (ODL) features the teacher as facilitator, engaging learners' active participation through the use of various technologies accessed through the internet while they are geographically remote from each other during instruction. Modular Distance Learning (MDL) involves individualized instruction that allows learners to use self-learning modules (SLMs) in print or digital format whichever is applicable in the context of the learner, and other learning resources like learner's materials, textbooks, activity sheets, study guides, and other study materials. These modalities endeavored to establish systems that are child-friendly, culture and gender sensitive, safe, and motivational, ensuring the well-being of learners.

**Figure 31:** Number of Learners under the Learning Modalities by Level of Education




*Source: DepEd Data Bits: Learning Delivery Modality for SY 2021-2022* [65]

The figure shows that for each level, a large percentage of learners are employing MDL (Print) modality, followed by ODL and Blended Distance Learning. Printed modular learning modality is the most preferred among all the strategies. One reason for this is the households' lack of access to the internet. This is also the most practical since there is no need for parents and learners to provide gadgets or devices if their situation or financial capacity do not allow them to do so.

[64] USAID, *Philippines Remote Learning Study: Findings Brief #4: Student Engagement,* https://ierc-publicfiles.s3.amazonaws.com/public/resources/4.%20Student%20Engagement_FINAL_0.pdf
[65] Philippines, Department of Education, *DepEd Data Bits: Learning Delivery Modality for SY 2021-2022*, 2022, https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/7-Databits-Learning-Delivery-Modalities-Jul.pdf

### *Partnering with communities including parents for learning continuity*

To optimize learning at home, it is essential to strengthen community and school collaboration, with a particular emphasis on fostering parental involvement, as highlighted from the grassroots consultations with the parents, teachers, and learners. At the school level, school heads and teachers have implemented various interventions to address the challenges of learners in distance learning. Some of the notable interventions include home-visitations, conduct of "kumustahan" or catch-up call, partnerships with local community members in providing tutorial services, donations of school supplies, and direct parental involvement on learning instruction. These school level interventions helped the learners and parents to adapt to the changes and challenges in the learning delivery mechanisms during the pandemic

## Impact after school re-opening

For the pilot implementation of the phased safe reopening, the ECCD Council issued Advisory #4 Series of 2022. During the pilot implementation, children attended classes once or twice a week following the set of guidelines. Notably, there were no reported cases of learners acquiring COVID during the implementation.

A total of 15 City and Municipal LGUs (1 per region except for CAR and CARAGA) with five (5) centers participated in pilot implementation. Likewise, all LGUs and centers complied with health and safety guidelines through the National Child Development Center (NCDC)/Child Development Center (CDC) Readiness Assessment Tool.

Following the success of the pilot implementation and consistent with the directions of the national government, the ECCD issued Advisory #8 Series of 2022: Guidelines for the Safe Reopening of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in the Philippines During the COVID-19 Pandemic. This provided for the nationwide reopening of centers aligned with DepEd's strategic and operational directions including compliance to minimum health and safety protocols and guidelines (partial to full face-to-face sessions). Corollary to this, a risk-informed plan template and monitoring and evaluation tools were developed to guide LGUs.

In parallel, for basic education, the Department of Education and the Department of Health issued two (2) joint memorandum circulars in 2021[66] and 2022[67] which provided operational guidelines on the mechanisms and standards on the resumption of face-to-face classes. After the successful implementation of gradual face-to-face classes, DepEd released DepEd Order No. 34, s. 2022 which contains guidelines on the School Calendar and Activities for School Year 2022-2023 in accordance with its commitment to the resumption of five (5) days of in-person classes.

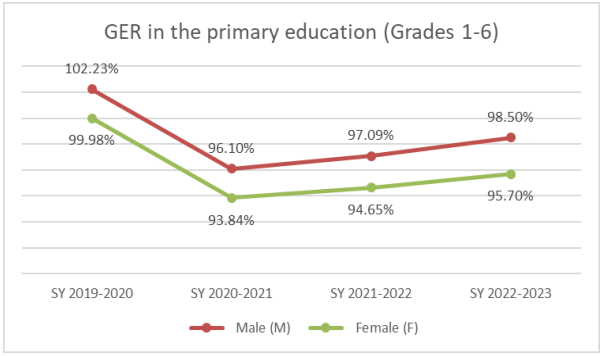
[66] Philippines, Department of Education and Department of Health, *DepEd-DOH Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01, s. 2021: Operational Guidelines on the Implementation of Limited Face-to-Face Learning Modality,* 2021.
[67] Philippines, Department of Education and Department of Health, *DepEd-DOH Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01, s. 2022: Revised Operational Guidelines on the Progressive Expansion of Face-to-Face Learning Modality*, 2022.

## *More learners enrolling and continuing their education*

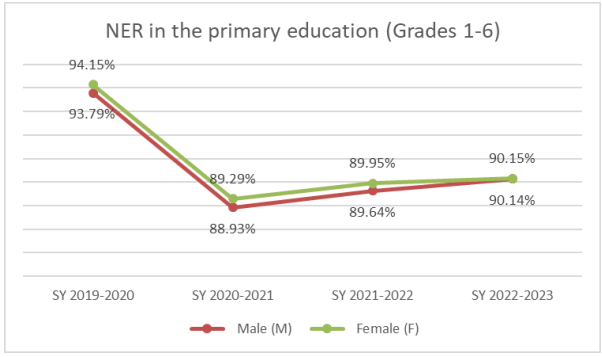
During SY 2021-2022, the Department of Education implemented a pilot and gradually expanded face-to-face classes, serving as the foundation for the full resumption of in-person learning in SY 2022-2023. Notably, this initiative led to a substantial increase in both gross and net enrollment rates in primary education. The positive response to the school reopening was evident, with more students enrolling and continuing their education.

In the context of secondary education, there was a minor decrease in the gross enrollment rate for both male and female students. However, this decrease was marginal and not indicative of a significant issue. Additionally, it's encouraging to observe a slight increase in the net enrollment rate for male learners during this period, indicating that a higher proportion of male students who initially enrolled also continued their studies. Although there was a slight decline in the net enrollment rate for female learners, it is crucial to closely monitor and address this trend to ensure equal opportunities for all students.

**Figure 32:** Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) and Net Enrollment Rate (NER) in Grades 1-6



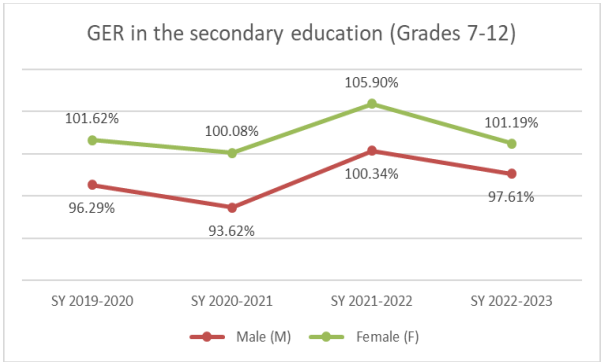

*SY 2022-2023 GER is only a preliminary result as of January 10, 2023.



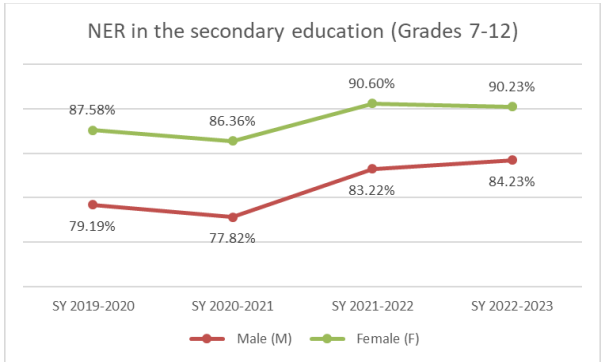

*SY 2022-2023 GER is only a preliminary result as of January 10, 2023.

*Source: DepEd*

**Figure 33:** Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) and Net Enrollment Rate (NER) in Grades 7-12




*SY 2022-2023 GER is only a preliminary result as of January 10, 2023.



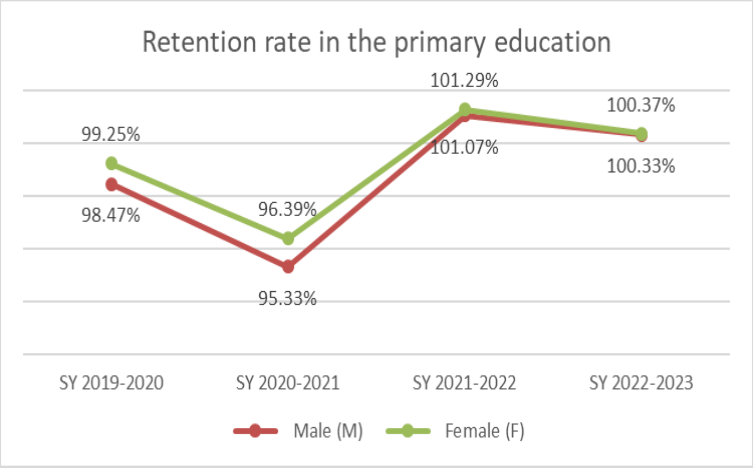

*SY 2022-2023 GER is only a preliminary result as of January 10, 2023.

*Source: DepEd*

## *Shifting trends in retention and dropout rates*

Following a year of distance learning during SY 2020-2021, there was a noteworthy surge in the retention rate during SY 2021-2022, coinciding with the gradual re-opening of limited face-to-face classes. This shift signified a positive response to the return of in-person learning opportunities. However, it is worth noting that since the full resumption of face-to-face classes in SY 2022-2023, there has been a decline in the retention rate across primary and secondary education, affecting both male and female students. This decrease in retention highlights the challenges posed by the transition back to traditional classroom settings and may warrant further investigation to identify the underlying factors contributing to this trend.

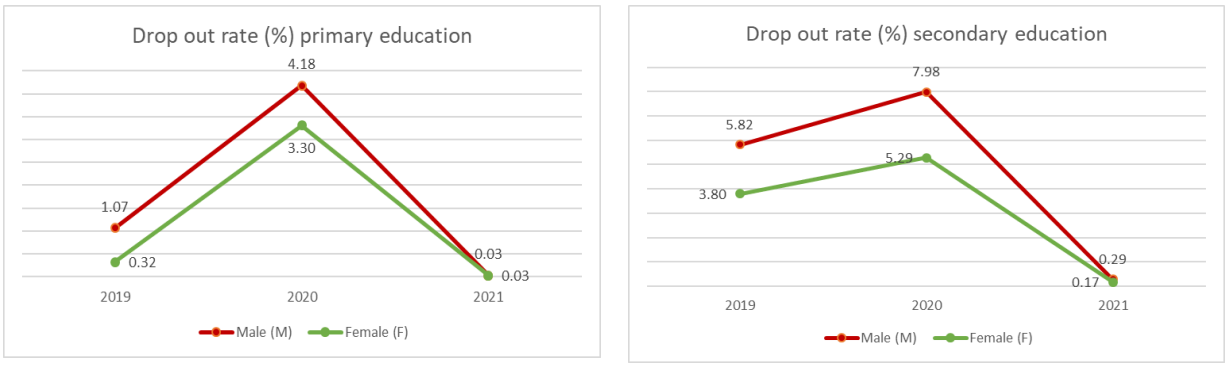
**Figure 34:** Retention Rates of SY 2019-2020 to SY 2020-2021




*Source: DepEd*

For the retention rates of SY 2019-2020 to SY 2020-2021, there was a positive trend, which consistently increased from 2020 to 2021. This rise in retention corresponds with a noticeable decline in the dropout rate during the same timeframe. These findings strongly suggest that a growing number of learners are choosing to stay in school rather than opting to drop out, which is a positive indicator for the overall educational environment.

**Figure 35:** Drop out Rates of SY 2019-2020 to SY 2020-2021




*Source: DepEd*

## *Lessons learned from the implementation of Face-to-Face Classes*

Based on the generated evidence from its evaluation, DepEd concluded that the implementation of face-to-face classes was highly successful. The joint guidelines developed and promulgated by DepEd and the DOH provided responsive and robust guidelines to ensure effective learning outcomes while securing the health and safety of participants. The framework of shared responsibility in time of emergency generated a high level of trust among the participants and stakeholders that facilitated the overall smooth conduct of the pilot program. With the adoption of the Shared Responsibility Framework, there is now evidently a high level of confidence among all stakeholders for the continued reintroduction of face-to-face classes in basic education.

Fostering safety, positive socio-emotional well-being, and enthusiasm in face-to-face classes during the pandemic

Nearly all the learners who participated in the face-to-face classes in SY 2021-2022 felt a strong sense of safety, largely attributed to the support provided by their teachers in processing and understanding their emotions regarding returning to school. Approximately 81% of Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS) learners expressed comfort in discussing their feelings about attending face-to-face classes. Furthermore, a significant number of students, 79% of JHS learners and 81% of SHS learners, reported feeling at ease discussing their anxiety related to COVID-19 pandemic. There is also a high positive observation from parents and teachers that learners are eager and enthusiastic to go to school because they are able to see their classmates and teachers. These findings highlight the positive impact of teacher involvement in fostering a safe and supportive learning environment during the challenging times of the pandemic.

This positive outcome is attributed to various factors, including the high compliance with required safe physical school facilities, meticulous observance of health and safety protocols, and the emotional comfort experienced during the face-to-face class. Teachers and school heads played a crucial role in confidently carrying out teaching and learning activities while ensuring the continued adherence to health and safety measures both within the classroom and on the school premises.

The support received from community partners in terms of manpower and financial resources played a significant role in enabling the safe implementation of face-to-face classes. As a result, there has been a notable positive change in the learning behavior of K to 12 learners. These learners reported improvements in knowledge acquisition, learning attitude, and learning performance during the face-to-face class, as attested by the learners themselves, their parents, and teachers.

The physical presence of teachers and classmates has been a key motivating factor for learners, contributing to their enthusiasm to attend school and diligently complete all academic tasks. The expanded phase of face-to-face classes has received high levels of satisfaction from learners, parents, and community members alike.

CHAPTER 5

# Ways Forward

In light of identified challenges which are affecting its ability to achieve the objectives of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) and its commitments to SDG 4 2030, the Philippines, through its various education sector agencies such as the Early Childhood Care and Development Council and the Department of Education will implement long term plans and agenda.

## ECCD 2030 Directions

For early childhood care and development, the 2030 directions of the ECCD include the expansion of access to quality ECCD programs and services, continuous roll-out of standards, and guidelines and establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system, institutionalization of programs for human resource development, legislative support and improvement of policy mechanisms, and strengthening collaboration and cooperation with LGUs, National Government Agencies (NGAs), and NGOs.

## MATATAG Agenda

For basic education, DepEd will implement a purposive education agenda dubbed as the MATATAG Education agenda.

*Matatag* is a Filipino term for resilience. The MATATAG education agenda embodies the current administration's resolve to confront head-on the current challenges the basic education sector is facing particularly in addressing the learning crisis in the country. It lays down four (4) thematic areas as priorities which are supported by 45 specific commitments designed to surgically address education gaps.

**Table 8:** The MATATAG Agenda Commitments

| MAke the curriculum relevant to produce job-ready, active and responsible citizens | TAke steps to accelerate the delivery of basic education facilities and services | TAke good care of learners by promoting learner well-being, inclusive education, and a positive learning environment | Give support to teachers to teach better |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Revise the K to 12 Curriculum to make them more responsive to our aspiration as a nation | 1. Created the School Infrastructure and Facilities Strand | 1. Provide education to children and youth in situations of disadvantage<br>2. Strengthen and institutionalize the reintegration | 1. Provide professional development programs<br>2. Provide support in terms of innovative, |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2. Reduce the number of learning areas to focus on foundational skills<br>3. Strengthen our literacy and numeracy programs<br>4. Revitalize our Reading, Science and Technology, and Math programs<br>5. Improve English proficiency while recognizing linguistic diversity<br>6. Review the implementation of the Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education Policy<br>7. Intensify the values formation of learners in curriculum and teaching<br>8. Embed the culture of peace in our curriculum<br>9. Be transparent with curriculum guides and test scores<br>10. Share test items with schools and teachers to strengthen the use of assessment<br>11. Engage with CHED and | 2. Build more resilient schools and classrooms<br>3. Close the remaining gaps in school infrastructure with policies to eliminate corruption<br>4. Establish fully-functional library hubs<br>5. Provide schools with electricity<br>6. Provide e-classroom packages for teaching and learning<br>7. Digitize our essential processes, including our national assessments<br>8. Launch our National Education Portal<br>9. Strengthen the complementarity between public and private schools<br>10. Work closely with Congress in pushing for the expansion of GASTPE coverage to include kindergarten and elementary learners. | program for adolescent mothers, Children at Risk (CAR), and Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL)<br>3. Strengthen the mechanism in safeguarding our learners against all forms of discrimination and dangers<br>4. Seek out mental wellness experts to form interventions at the school level<br>5. Strengthen inclusive education programs, including the alternative learning system, last mile schools, and programs for IP learners and learners with disabilities<br>6. Establish of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers<br>7. Provide assessment assistive mechanisms to students with disabilities<br>8. Eradicate illiteracy through relevant policy issuances, and community | responsive, and inclusive teaching approaches following the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST).<br>3. Capacitate our teachers and learners in utilizing technology in remote learning to maximize the benefits of digital learning.<br>4. Provide training and other learning and development interventions for school leaders<br>5. Fast-track the implementation of the career progression policy<br>6. Implement the Merit Selection Policy<br>7. Make the new Teacher Education Council and Secretariat fully functional<br>8. Advocate for additional benefits for our teachers<br>9. Implement the policy on the distribution of |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| TESDA, and various industry partners to address the issue of skills mismatch | 11. Support BARMM School Building Program and GASTPE direction.<br>12. Creation of the Procurement Strand | literacy program interventions.<br>9. Involve our parents and guardians in the education of our children. | teacher workload and payment of teaching overload<br>10. Expand the coverage for the grant of Special Hardship Allowances<br>11. Address issues affecting the net-take-home pay of teachers<br>12. Work with DOH for free annual physical examinations for teachers<br>13. Coordinate with the GSIS for an improved and superior benefits package for all DepEd personnel<br>14. Provide a free legal assistance facility for teachers on matters concerning loan contracts and obligations. |

1. **MAke the curriculum relevant to produce competent, job-ready, active, and responsible citizens.**

Teachers are critical to the success of education. When they are supported, education quality improves.

The ultimate measure of success or failure of an education system is the learners. The learning abilities of each learner are developed through the interplay of various inputs such as classroom, teacher competence, learning tools and

equipment and school environment. All of these inputs come together in making the intent of the curriculum a reality. It all starts with the curriculum design.

The current K to 12 curriculum is perceived to be congested with serious implementation issues that need to be appropriately addressed. This thematic area ensures the implementation of relevant and responsive curriculum who are ready for higher education, employment, advanced technical education and entrepreneurship.

### 2. TAke steps to accelerate the delivery of basic education facilities and services.

School Infrastructure is a basic requirement for a school to effectively operate and deliver education services. While technology is changing the way education is delivered, the need for modern classrooms with facilities and services, such as laboratories, tools, equipment and ICT packages, remains critical in providing a conducive and motivating learning environment.

Through this thematic area, the Department aims to provide an ideal learning environment that will allow each learner to acquire the required competencies appropriate to their age, culture, learning styles and capabilities. The infusion of technology for education is designed to equip learners with skills that will enable them to achieve a certain level of agility and nimbleness to stay abreast of the rapidly changing socio-economic environment.

### 3. TAke good care of learners by promoting learner well-being, inclusive education, and a positive learning environment.

Despite major improvements in participation, issues of exclusion still linger which are caused by several factors, such as geographic isolation of certain communities, low family income, early marriages, child labor, lack of interest and family problems, among others. To address this, several commitments were issued under MATATAG to address the root cause of exclusion.

Where there are existing programs that are designed to address exclusion, lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic call for the enhancement of strategies or even the introduction of new strategies to address the gaps.

This thematic area will ensure greater access of all Filipino children and youth to educational services regardless of circumstances. While the main problem is on quality, this agenda will ensure that no Filipino child is left behind.

### 4. Give support to teachers to teach better.

Teachers play a critical role in student learning. They are responsible for designing and delivering instruction, creating a positive learning environment, assessing student progress, and providing feedback and support to help students improve academic performance. However, the teacher's ability to effectively do their job is often hampered by conditions such as congested classrooms, lack of learning materials, lack of appropriate training, too many administrative tasks and other factors that affect their efficiency.

In recognition of the teacher's role in honing the minds and character of Filipino children and youth, appropriate support packages and services will be accorded to them.

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