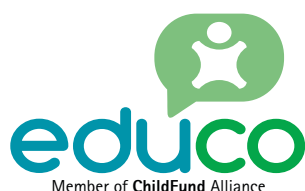


Report

Factors in Enabling Rights to, in and through Education: a Child Rights Situation Analysis (CRSA) of Bicol Region

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS RESOURCE CENTER (PST CRRC) AND FUNDACIÓN EDUCACIÓN Y COOPERACIÓN (EDUCO)





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List of Acronyms

ALS	Alternative Learning System
AMD	Alternative Modes of Delivery
CICL	Children in Conflict with the Law
CPC	Child Protection Committee
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRSA	Child Rights Situation Analysis
CRP	Child Rights Programming
CSA	Country Situation Analysis
DepEd	Department of Education
DORP	Dropout Reduction Program
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
e-IMPACT	Enhanced Instructional Management by Parents Community and Teachers
HSP	Home-Schooling Program
HR	Human Rights
LCPC	Local Council for the Protection of Children
LGU	Local Government Unit
LSB	Local School Board
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MISOSA	Modified In-School, Off-School Approach
MPPE	Multi-grade Program in Philippine Education
MTB-MLE	Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education
NAT	National Achievement Test
OSY	Out-of-School Youth
PWD	Person with Disability
RBP	Rights-based Programming
SBM	Grant School-Based Management Grant
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Definition of Terms

Cohort Survival Rate (CSR) refers to the percentage of enrollees at the beginning grade or year who reached the final grade or year of the elementary/secondary level (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2006).

Culture is comprised of values, attitudes, norms, ideas, internalized habits and perceptions as well as the concrete forms or expression they take in. For example, social roles, structures and relationships, codes of behaviors and explanations for behavior that are to a significant extent shared among a group of people. Culture is learned and internalized, and influences people's actions and interpretations of circumstances at the same time as people in turn influence the content of culture by their compliance with it or by challenging it.

Declarations articulate agreed upon principles and standards. These documents are not in themselves legally binding. However, some declarations, most notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have been so widely recognized that their provisions are considered as binding for all states.

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) System refers to the full range of health, nutrition, early education and social services development programs that provide for the basic holistic needs of young children from age zero (0) to four (4) years; and to promote their optimum growth and development (RA 10410, 2013).

Enhanced Basic Education Program encompasses at least one (1) year of kindergarten education, six (6) years of elementary education, and six (6) years of secondary education as sequenced. Secondary education includes four (4) years of junior high school and two (2) years of senior high school education. This can also be delivered through the alternative learning system (IRR of RA 10533, 2013).

Kindergarten Education is the first stage of compulsory and mandatory formal education which consists of one (1) year of preparatory education for children at least five (5) years old as a prerequisite for Grade 1.

Elementary Education refers to the second stage of compulsory basic education which is composed of six (6) years. The entrant age to this level is typically six (6) years old.

Secondary Education refers to the third stage of compulsory basic education. It consists of four (4) years of junior high school education and two (2) years of senior high school education. The entrant age to junior and senior high school levels are typically twelve (12) and sixteen (16) years old, respectively.

Gender Cultural interpretation of biological sex; definitions of what is considered to be feminine and masculine in particular cultural and social settings, and expectations of women and men, boys and girls with respect to these definitions; social, economic and political relationships between males and females in specific societies.

Human rights are the rights possessed by all persons, by virtue of their common humanity, to live a life of freedom and dignity. They give all people moral claims on the behaviour of individuals and on the design of social arrangements. Human rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible. They express our deepest commitments to ensuring that all persons are secure in their enjoyment of the goods and freedoms that are necessary for dignified living.

Human rights treaties, covenants and conventions are part of international law. Used interchangeably, treaty, covenant and convention refer to legally binding agreements between states. These agreements define the duties of states parties to the treaty, covenant or convention. They apply in times of peace and conflict. Human rights treaties regulate obligations of states towards persons in their own territory (rather than towards other states). Even though the UDHR is not a convention, it has become “common law” and is now considered legally binding for all states.

K-12 Program covers Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education (six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School [SHS]) to provide sufficient time for mastery of concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners, and prepare graduates for tertiary education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship.

Malnutrition means deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person’s intake of energy and/or nutrients. It covers 2 broad groups of conditions. The first is ‘undernutrition’— which includes stunting (low height for age), wasting (low weight for height), underweight (low weight for age) and micronutrient deficiencies or insufficiencies (a lack of important vitamins and minerals). And the second is overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer) (WHO, 2017).

Ratification of an international agreement (treaty, covenant, convention) represents the promise of a state to uphold it and adhere to the legal norms that it specifies. Ratification is an act of government or parliament that makes a treaty binding and enforceable in the state.

Realization of human rights. A human right is realized when individuals enjoy the freedoms covered by that right and their enjoyment of the right is secure. A person's human rights are realized if sufficient social arrangements are in place to protect her/him against threats to her/his enjoyment of the freedoms covered by those rights.

States parties to an international agreement are the countries that have ratified it and are thereby legally bound to comply with its provisions. Governments are representatives of states. Once they have ratified an international treaty, all subsequent governments of that state have to abide by them. If they don't abide by the treaties ratified by earlier governments, the international community can impose sanctions.

Treaty bodies are the committees formally established through the principal international human rights treaties to monitor states parties' compliance with the treaties. Treaty bodies have been set up for the six core UN human rights treaties to monitor states parties' efforts to implement their provisions.

Universality. Human rights belong to all people, and all people have equal status with respect to these rights. Failure to respect an individual's human right has the same weight as failure to respect the right of any other – it is not better or worse depending on the person's gender, race, ethnicity, nationality or any other distinction.



Executive Summary

This Child Rights Situation Analysis (CRSA) was produced by Fundación Educación y Cooperación – Educo in the Philippines to guide its country programming by identifying the rights being enjoyed by Bicolano children, and the factors that promote or hinder them.

The CRSA involved an extensive review of primary and secondary data. Interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) among school children, teachers, parents, government workers were also conducted in nine (9) barangays in the provinces of Masbate (Masbate City, Claveria, San Pascual), Camarines Sur (Bato), Albay (Libon, Polangui), and Sorsogon (Pilar, Donsol, Castilla) from 2015 to 2017.

Children’s rights to education in Bicol are affected by an interplay of national, local, family, and individual factors. The CRSA found that low investments due to debt servicing, inefficiencies in spending the available budget, and disasters are some of the strongest issues affecting education.

Using its ‘Education for Human Dignity’ framework, Educo used the lens of education to analyze child rights. Situation of child rights in Bicol are organized in the three dimensions of education as a right.

- 1. Right to education (access):** In Bicol, children are not able to fully enjoy their right to education because (1) there is a shortage of classrooms; (2) high schools are only in town centers; (3) there are indirect costs to education; (4) young children are unprepared for formal schooling; (5) children engage in work; (6) schools are not accessible for children with disabilities, and (6) some gender dimensions are affecting access to education.

2. **Rights in education (quality):** Bicolano children are yet to acquire a kind of education that truly respects, fulfills, and protects all their rights as stated in the UN Convention of the Rights of the child because (1) teachers lack in number, training, and incentives; (2) many schools cannot provide a child-centered, conducive learning environment; and, (3) reforms in curriculum have met challenges in implementation.
3. **Rights through education (contribution to achievement of other rights):** (1) Philippine culture; (2) bullying and corporal punishment; and (3) lack of meaningful child participation in school governance and development are hindering education to be a means for children to realize all of their rights.

Because multiple factors affect education in Bicol, the CRSA also outlines responsibilities among duty bearers in children's education. National Government Agencies (NGAs) should put in place the necessary policies to provide guidance and budget that ensure child rights. Local Governments on the other hand must ensure that these are cascaded through aligning their own plans and process as well as ensuring efficient service delivery. Ultimately, when it comes to children's education, the schools are the central insurers of success of these programs, plans, and services. Civil Society Organizations' role in this is to avoid duplicating the government's efforts and complement them instead.

Finally, to address the factors affecting child rights in Bicol, it is recommended that (1) higher budget for education be advocated; (2) fundraising for education be done; (3) training for teachers be supported; (4) organizations harmonize their programs; (5) functionality of key structures for children protection and participation are ensured. Consistent and comprehensive implementation of educational reforms at all levels is essential to the realization of children's rights to, in, and through education.

Introduction

Education has a significant impact on the lives of individuals and national life, as each one is “born with potential and carries the right to develop it”.¹ **Education harnesses this potential as it “promotes individual freedom and empowerment”** that are “**essential for the exercise of all other human rights**”² and making better choices in life.³ Education also enables “economically and socially marginalized [people] to lift themselves out of poverty and participate fully as citizens”.⁴

The educational attainment of households is inversely proportional to the incidence of poverty, such that the higher the educational attainment of household members, the lesser the incidence of poverty. Poverty incidence is 41.7 percent for households with members who finished high school⁵, while households whose adult members did not finish high school comprise 56 percent of total poor households. The study also reveals that households with adult elementary graduate and undergraduate members are chronically poor.⁶

Because of its role in human development, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) proclaimed education as a fundamental right of all and not just a privilege. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁷, on the other hand, emphasizes that education: 1) is an empowerment right; 2) lifts marginalized groups out of poverty; 3) aids in realizing other rights; and 4) contributes to the full development of the human personality.

Nation-States also recognize the role of education in reducing poverty because it prepares its citizens to be productive members of society.⁸ Ilhan Ozturk⁹ emphasizes the intertwining role of education: “no country has achieved constant economic development without considerable investment in human capital.” Elementary education raises the productivity of workers in rural and urban settings, secondary education facilitates the acquisition of skills (e.g. vocational) and managerial capacity, while college education helps develop the

1 UNESCO. 2005. Education for Human Development. Brasilia: UNESCO. Available html <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001403/140309e.pdf>. Accessed on 21 September 2016.

2 UNESCO. No Date. The Right to Education. Available html <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/right2education>. Accessed on 1 September 2016.

3 UNESCO. 2005. Education for Human Development. Brasilia: UNESCO. Available html <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001403/140309e.pdf>. Accessed on 21 September 2016.

4 UNESCO. No Date. The Right to Education. Available html <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/right2education>. Accessed on 1 September 2016.

5 Ducanes, Geoffrey M. and Editha Abella Tan. 2014. Education, Location, Poverty. Philippine Daily Inquirer. Available html <http://opinion.inquirer.net/76312/education-location-poverty>. Accessed on 5 September 2016.

6 Ibid.

7 United Nations. No Date Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Available html <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

8 Bautista, Ma. Cynthia Rose B., Allan B.I. Bernardo, and Dina Ocampo. 2009. “When Reforms Don’t Transform: Reflections on Institutional Reforms in the Department of Education.” Human Development Network Series 2008/2009 Series No. 2.

9 Ozturk, Ilhan. 2001. “The Role of Education in Economic Development: A Theoretical Perspective.” Journal of Rural Development and Administration. Vol 23 (1): 39-47.

sciences and technology and develops key institutions of government, the law, and the financial system, among others, all essential for economic growth”.¹⁰

Lastly, the UNESCO Incheon Declaration of 2015 calls for inclusive and equitable access to quality education and lifelong learning, which will serve as the key to achieving full employment and poverty eradication. This commitment was included in the 2030 Education Agenda and it was established as the SDG4. The Framework pushes States to address all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access (including gender inequality), participation and learning outcomes as part of its sustainable goals until 2030.¹¹

The CSRA focuses on the right to education of children in the Bicol region and how this is affected by macro factors emanating from the national socioeconomic, political, and cultural context as well as factors within the community.

Overview and Rationale

The Child Rights Situational Analysis (CRSA) was conducted for Educo’s country programming. It served as a main reference for planning and was conceptualized as both a diagnostic and a capacity-building tool.

As a diagnostic tool, it aimed to estimate the level of children’s enjoyment of their rights by understanding the present status, trends, and factors that contribute to or hinder the enjoyment of these rights. As a capacity-building tool, it intended to discover the roles and responsibilities of Educo and key external stakeholders in upholding children’s rights. It was also envisioned to be a learning opportunity for Educo in conducting future CRSAs.

Objectives

The CRSA aims to determine the extent of children’s enjoyment of their rights by gathering the following information:

- What rights are not being enjoyed and by which groups of children.
- Which specific institutions or persons are accountable for upholding children’s rights, including their knowledge, capacities, and attitudes in relation to this accountability.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ UNESCO. 2015. Education 2030 Incheon Declaration. Available html <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/incheon-framework-for-action-en.pdf>

- What are the evolving cultural, social, economic, political, and environmental conditions that affect children’s enjoyment of their rights.

Framework

Educo’s concept of education, its meaning and goals are drawn, in large part, from various international human rights standards; and given that Educo is a child right-based organization, it takes, as its fundamental basis, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This convention defends/declares that children can lead a life of dignity when their rights are fulfilled and protected.

Educo regards education as an intrinsic human right that is an inherent part of the entire life cycle and that allows other rights to be enjoyed and reinforced. Foregoing a more development-oriented perspective, which associates education with schooling, Educo promotes comprehensive quality education based on rights and dignity, and that fosters environments that generate wellbeing for one and all.

Figure 1. Educo’s ‘Education for Human Dignity’ Framework



This CRSA looks at the achievement of child rights in Bicol through the lens of Education for Human Dignity, as shown in the figure above. This means that Educo looks at education not only as a right in itself but also a means to achieving other rights.

Structure of Analysis

Educo gives substance to this framework through three dimensions of education as a right: the right to education, rights in education and rights through education:

- **Right to Education** draws on Article 28 of the CRC and mainly concerns the aspects of availability and accessibility, which is equitable access to quality education.
- **Rights in Education** are based on Articles 28 and 29 of the CRC that essentially look at content, environment, and process in education that respect, fulfill and protect the rights of the child.
- **Rights through Education** refers to education reaching beyond the confines of a specific educational space and establish ties with the surrounding environment, thus generating greater justice and wellbeing for one and all.

The Rights through education dimension is comprised of two basic elements: integrating human rights in the curriculum and culture of the educational system; and, laying the foundations for the enjoyment of other rights.

Scope and Methodology

The CRSA involved the extensive review of primary and secondary data on both the national and Bicol-based situation of the enjoyment of children's rights, particularly the right to education.

The team conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) among elementary, high school, out-of-school youth, elementary and high school teachers and parents of students. The FGDs were conducted in nine (9) barangays in the provinces of Masbate (Masbate City, Claveria, San Pascual), Camarines Sur (Bato), Albay (Libon, Polangui), and Sorsogon (Pilar, Donsol, Castilla) in May 2015 as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. List of Barangays Covered by the CRSA

Province	City/Municipality	Barangay	Main source of livelihood - Topography	Educo Partner/ Non-partner
Camarines Sur	Bato	Sagrada	Fishing - lakeside	Partner
Albay	Libon	Pantao	Fishing - coastal	Non-partner
	Polangui	Agos	Farming - plain	Partner
Sorsogon	Castilla	Libtong	Farming - upland	Non-partner
	Pilar	Millabas	Farming - plain	Partner
	Donsol	Malinao	Farming - upland	Non-partner
Masbate	Masbate City	Tugbo	Fishing - urban	Non-partner
	Claveria	Imelda	Fishing - coastal	Non-partner
	San Pascual	Pinamasingan	Fishing - coastal	Non-partner

Key informant interviews were also held with school heads, municipal social workers, municipal planning and development officers, kindergarten teachers, and day care workers from May to June 2015. Additional interviews were done in February 2017 with Department of Education (DepEd) division and regional office officers.

A consultation meeting with Educo field staff was also organized to document their experiences, observations, and insights on the ground in 2015 and 2017.

Lastly, validation workshops were conducted in 2015, 2016, and 2017 to confirm the results of the earlier study, clarify certain findings, and gather additional data to fill in the data gaps. These were held in the provinces of Sorsogon, Albay and Camarines Sur among the following groups: teachers and school district administrators; parents; and children.



Context of Child Rights in the Philippines

National Context

Throughout the 1980s to the early years of the new millennium, the Philippines was regarded as the ‘sick man of Asia’ before its transition to a democratic form of government in 1986.

As its East Asian and Southeast Asian neighbors surged forward economically, the Philippines was set back by recurring social, economic and political issues that parallel challenges in ensuring greater access to education.

To date, underdevelopment remains a growing concern with a number of people experiencing poverty. In the last decade or so, the government has focused on securing macroeconomic stability, promoting public sector transparency, and focusing fiscal resources on pro-poor infrastructure projects and social services, and targeting inclusive growth.

The following section presents how gains and gaps in overcoming key socioeconomic and political challenges either reinforce or constrain the State’s capacity to provide education to Filipino children.

Population, Economy, and Poverty

In 2015, Philippines had an estimated 102,965,300 people.¹² Around 45 percent of this or 46,155,300 are aged 5-24 years old. On the other hand, 40 percent of the population is composed of children below 18 years old, which in absolute numbers add up to 41,186,120. The number represents segments of the Philippine population that attend school, and are dependent on adults and the State for basic care and support. By 2040, numbers¹³ are projected to increase to more than 48 million.¹⁴

The young population affects the State’s capacity to provide education for everyone, especially when resources are scarce. In the Philippines, elementary education is free and

12 National Statistical Coordination Board. 2016. Population Projections. Available html http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d_popnProj.asp. Accessed on 1 September 2016.

13 De Vera, Ben O. 2017. “Duterte economic policy direction ‘uncertain.’ Philippine Daily Inquirer. 3 October. Available html. <http://business.inquirer.net/215996/duterte-economic-policy-direction-uncertain>

14 Racelis, Rachel. 2012. “Implications of Philippine Trends in Education Financing and Projected Change in School-Age Population on Education Expenditures by Income Group: Using NTA Results.” Philippine Institute of Development Studies. Available html <http://dirp3.pids.gov.ph/ris/dps/pidsdps1234.pdf>. Accessed on 22 September 2016.

compulsory as mandated by the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 or Republic Act (RA) 9155 of 2001. Being state-financed, basic public education requires hefty subsidies coming from the state to finance the education of millions of Filipinos. At this stage in their life, children require both care and investment from the family and the state as well.

The Philippines remains one of the Asian countries with the highest population growth rates, along with Cambodia, Brunei, and Lao PDR. Continuously growing population means more resources are needed from the government. All in all, there are 23,973,559 students enrolled from kinder to secondary school for the academic year 2014-2015, the majority of whom attend public schools, as shown in Table 2 below. Of this 23.9 million, (88%) of school age children are being subsidized by public schools, while 2 percent attend private schools.¹⁵

Table 2. Comparative Enrollment in Philippine Public and Private Schools

	Public Schools	Private Schools	Total
	2014-2015	2014-2015	
Total	21,042,250	2,931,309	23,973,559
Elementary	13,301,248	1,180,378	14,481,626
Secondary	5,928,042	1,353,320	7,281,362
Kinder	1,812,960	397,611	2,210,571

The paradox of education is that it plays a role in improving a country’s economy; however, the economy has bearing on the capacity of the national government to provide basic education.

In 1982, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Philippines declined and plateaued for 21 years.¹⁶ Former Education Secretary Alejandro Roces¹⁷ notes that the slow descent of the quality of Philippine education started during this period. The Philippines was under pressure from multilateral development banks and other international financial institutions to prioritize debt repayment over the provision of social services, including

15 ABS CBN News. 2015. "School Trivia: How many Students in Philippine Schools?" 1 June 2015. Available html <http://news.abs-cbn.com/nation/06/01/15/school-trivia-how-many-students-philippine-schools>. Accessed on 22 September 2016.

16 Punongbayan, JC and Kevin Mandrilla. 2016. "Marcos years marked 'golden age' of Philippine economy? Look at data." Rappler. Available html <http://www.rappler.com/views/imho/124682-marcos-economy-golden-age-philippines>. Accessed on 11 October 2016.

17 Roces, Alejandro. 2006. "The decline in quality of Philippine education." Philippine Star. 21 November. 2006 Available html <http://www.philstar.com/opinion/369945/decline-quality-philippine-education>. Accessed on 8 October 2016.

education. The country found itself heavily in debt after almost a decade of dictatorship under the Marcos regime.

Between 2001 and 2010, under the Arroyo administration, institutional reforms helped boost the Philippine economy.¹⁸ However, problems in education persisted, with shortages in classrooms, teachers, textbooks, and computers. During this time, education programs were described to be divided into two periods: “The first four years of benign neglect (education spending barely keeping up with enrollment), followed by four years of frantic catch-up spending”.¹⁹

From 2010 to 2016, economic growth rates were maintained, with the average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at 6.3 percent from 2010 to 2014.²⁰ Growth rates, however, did not trickle down to improve people’s quality of life, or their access to quality education, as much or as fast as initially expected.

Despite continued economic growth rates during the Aquino Administration, it has reportedly “only benefited a tiny minority of elite families,” or 0.01 percent of the population.²¹ Poverty rate in the country in 2009 was 26.5 percent.²² which marginally decreased to 26.3 percent in 2015.²³ The steady increase in the Philippine population means that the absolute numbers of the poor continue to increase.

In 2015, an estimated 27 million Filipinos were living in poverty. The incidence of poverty is also higher for households with a higher number of children. For instance, 57 percent of households with more than five children are poor compared to 0.68 percent of households with one child.²⁴

Development has also been concentrated mostly in large urban centers in the country, leaving rural areas, where 75 percent of poor Filipinos live, lagging behind.

18 Luis, Leoncio. 2015. “Reforms with GMA, not Aquino says Moody’s.” *The Market Monitor*. 18 October 2015. Available html <http://marketmonitor.com.ph/reforms-began-with-gma-not-aquino-says-moodys/>. Accessed on 11 October 2016.

19 De Guzman, Sara Soliven. 2010. “Basic Education in Crisis.” *Philippine Star*. 12 July 2010. Available html <http://www.philstar.com/opinion/592170/basic-education-crisis>. Accessed on 11 October 2016.

20 National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA). 2016. GDP. Available html <http://www.gov.ph/report/gdp/>. Accessed on 2 September 2016

21 Keenan, Jillian. 2013. “The Grim Reality Behind the Philippines’ Economic Growth.” *The Atlantic*. Available html <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/05/the-grim-reality-behind-the-philippines-economic-growth/275597/>. Accessed on 2 September 2016

22 Orante, Bea. 2015. “Despite high economic growth, PH poverty on the rise.” *Rappler*. 24 September. Available html <http://www.rappler.com/move-ph/106966-economic-growth-ph-poverty>. Accessed on 2 September 2016.

23 Philippine Statistics Authority. 2016. “Poverty among Filipinos registered at 26.3% as of first semester of 2015.” 18 March. Available html <https://psa.gov.ph/poverty-press-releases>.

24 *ibid.*

Nevertheless, over the last 10 years, the government has made important strides in meeting the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly those that involve children; thereby reducing the impact of inequality on the lives of some Filipinos. Table 3 shows the Philippines' progress towards its MDG targets.

Table 3. Data on Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Targets

Goals/Target/Indicators	Baseline (1991)	Target	Latest
Proportion of population below national poverty threshold	34.4 (1991)	17.2 (2015)	26.3 (2015)
Poverty Gap Ratio	9.3 (1991)	4.5 (2015)	5.1 (2012)
Prevalence of underweight children under 5 years of age using Child Growth Standards (CGS)	25.5 (1992)	13.3 (2015)	19.9 (2013)
Percent of household with per capita energy less than 100 percent of 100% adequacy	74.2 (1993)	37.1 (2015)	65.2 (2013)
Proportion of population with mean one-day energy intake less than 100 percent of 100% adequacy	17.6 (1991)		79.1 (2013)
Proportion of population below national subsistence (food) threshold	17.6 (1991)	8.8 (2015)	10.4 (2012)
Net enrolment ratio in primary education	84.6 (1990)	100 (2015)	93.8
Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 6 (Cohort Survival Rate)	69.7 (1990)	100.0 (2015)	80.6 (2013)
Primary completion rate	64.2 (1990)	100.0 (2015)	78.5 (2013)

Although there was reported reduction in poverty and in hunger, chronic malnutrition rate among children aged 0-2 was at 26.2 percent, the highest in 10 years, according to a 2015 survey by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI) of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST). Chronic malnutrition, or stunting rate for children under 5 years old, was at 33.5 percent, up by 30.5 percent in 2015 from 2013.²⁵ Unfortunately, lack of proper nutrition contributes to physical and cognitive developmental delays among children, severely impairing their capacity to learn.

²⁵ Aquino, Nico. 2016. "National Survey: Chronic Malnutrition in PH worst in 10 years." Rappler. Available html <http://www.rappler.com/move-ph/issues/hunger/130046-philippines-chronic-malnutrition>.

Governance

Misgovernance is a key factor in poverty, and contributes to magnifying its impact, based on a report by the Global Financial Integrity in 2014.

The report notes that USD410.5B was lost to corruption between 1960 and 2011. This is equivalent to about PhP19.34T according to current exchange rates.²⁶

Oligarchic features of government may also concentrate resources among the few and not distributed equitably across socioeconomic classes.²⁷ Corruption continues to pervade at different levels of government and across regions as those in power benefit from the system rather than curb it.²⁸

Government mismanagement has resulted in missed development targets and the accumulation of debt that continuously strains socioeconomic development. Academics have described the Philippine State as a “weak and divided state, which seldom had the right ‘policy space’ to make optimal economic decisions.”²⁹

Furthermore, entrenched elites have promoted “particularistic interests” and “block[ed] policies/legislations aimed at national development.” International financial institutions (IFIs) have also “prescribed counterproductive policies, notably ‘Structural Adjustment Programs’ (SAPs), causing tremendous poverty, social dislocation, agricultural decline and ‘de-industrialization’” across the country.³⁰

Civil Society Movements

Civil Society Organizations (CSO) started to flourish in the late 80s to the early 90s, after the historic non-violent People Power Revolution that toppled the Marcos dictatorship. The new democratic government and the great need for national development called for the passage of laws encouraging civil society participation in governance.³¹

26 Rey, Aika. 2016. “Impact of Corruption on the Philippines.” Rappler. August 10. Available html <http://www.rappler.com/move-ph/issues/corruption/141391-impact-corruption-philippines>.

27 Magcamit, Michael. 2016. “The Curse of Patronage Politics.” UP Forum. Available html <http://www.up.edu.ph/the-enduring-curse-of-patronage-politics/>.

28 Heydarian, Richard Javad. 2016. “The End of Philippine Democracy?” Huffington Post. Available html http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-javad-heydarian/the-end-of-philippine-dem b_9666998.html

29 Heydarian, Richard Javad. 2013. “Why the Philippines Failed?” Huffington Post. 19 April. Available html http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-javad-heydarian/why-the-philippines-faile b_3106136.html.

30 Ibid.

31 Asian Development Bank. 2013. Civil Society Briefs Philippines. Pasig: ADB. Available html <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30174/csb-phi.pdf>

These laws enabled government line agencies and NGOs to negotiate directly with bilateral funding institutions to finance development projects directly benefiting needy Filipinos. It also enabled CSOs to manage overseas development assistance (ODA) funds as funding institutions recognized these groups as effective channels for support to needy communities.

Latest figures estimate there are roughly 300,000 civil society organizations in the country,³² comprised of: socio-civic organizations (Lions Club, Rotary Club, etc.); religious groups; professional associations (e.g. lawyers association); business chambers and clubs; non-profit schools and hospitals; people's organizations (POs) (associations of farmers, fishers, drivers, etc.); development non-government organizations (NGOs), and many others.

Coalitions have been formed to enable resource sharing, to avoid duplication of services, to enable efficient collection of data especially for the Alternative Report, or for greater impact on advocacy. Of particular note is the formation of issue-based coalitions that have enabled effective broad-based campaigns,³³ such as the Philippine Coalition on the UNCRC, Philippine Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, among others.

CSOs provide expertise and manpower in local communities where government neither has the resources nor the experts to run projects and deliver public services. CSO leaders have occupied Cabinet positions during the Estrada, Arroyo, and Aquino presidencies³⁴ in recognition of the government-CSO partnership. Partnerships have drastically improved the protection of children's rights.



32 Arceo-Dumlao, Tina. 2016. "Civil Society Groups in Asia Thrive Best in PH, says Study." Philippine Daily Inquirer. Available html <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/138312/civil-society-groups-asia-thrive-best-ph-says-study#ixzz4ZfdplaZg>

33 Arceo-Dumlao, Tina. 2016. "Civil Society Groups in Asia Thrive Best in PH, says Study." Philippine Daily Inquirer. Available html <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/138312/civil-society-groups-asia-thrive-best-ph-says-study#ixzz4ZfdplaZg>

34 Asian Development Bank. 2013. Civil Society Briefs Philippines. Pasig: ADB. Available html <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30174/csb-phi.pdf>

Disasters and Emergencies

The location of the Philippines in the Pacific Ring of Fire and the typhoon belt in the Pacific has made the Philippines vulnerable to different types of natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and typhoons. These hinder new investments, while burdening government financing, and reinforcing poverty.³⁵ Agricultural production, the livelihood source of most poverty-stricken Filipinos, is especially affected by typhoons.

Aside from natural emergencies, man-made emergencies have also contributed to the economic woes of the country. The protracted armed conflict and terrorism has had serious effects on the human and economic development of the country. It has contributed to loss of productivity, reduced domestic and foreign direct investment, lost tourism revenue, depleted infrastructure and failing social services, and untold injuries to the populace.³⁶

Filipino Children and Their Rights

The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Progress Report of 2014 states that Philippine poverty thresholds went down to 25.2 percent in 2012 from 34.4 percent in 1991. The government needed to reduce poverty rates further by half to have reached its target of 17.5 poverty thresholds by 2015.³⁷

An estimated 13.4 million children are considered income poor,³⁸ which means the family of the children lives below the poverty line.³⁹ Unfortunately, “poverty poses the most serious threat to children’s rights.”⁴⁰

With the failure to bring down hunger rates in the country, 20.2 percent of children under five years old are underweight for their age,⁴¹ despite the fact that the DSWD runs a Supplementary Feeding Program for the poor. The Philippine government has reduced malnutrition incidence from the high of 27.3 percent in 1990 to 19.9 percent in 2013.

35 Benson, Charlotte. 1997. “The economic impact of natural disasters in the Philippines.” ODI. Available html <https://www.odi.org/publications/5629-philippines-economic-impact-natural-disasters>.

36 UNDP. 2008. “Armed Violence in Asia and the Pacific: An Overview of the Causes, Costs, and Consequences.” Briefing Paper. Available html <http://www.genevadeclaration.org/fileadmin/docs/regional-publications/Causes-Costs-and-Consequences-Armed-Violence-Asia-Pacific.pdf>.

37 United Nations Development Programme. 2014. The Philippines Fifth Progress Report Millennium Development Goals. Pasig: National Economic Development Authority.

38 Yacat, Jay. 2016. “Are Filipino Children Still at the Margins? Children’s Rights Implementation under the Aquino Administration.” UP Forum. 30 April. Available html <http://www.up.edu.ph/are-filipino-children-still-at-the-margins/>. Accessed on 14 October 2016.

39 UNESCO. No Date. Poverty. Available html <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/poverty/>

40 Yacat, Jay. 2016. “Are Filipino Children Still at the Margins? Children’s Rights Implementation under the Aquino Administration.” UP Forum. 30 April. Available html <http://www.up.edu.ph/are-filipino-children-still-at-the-margins/>. Accessed on 15 October 2016.

41 United Nations Development Programme. 2014. The Philippines Fifth Progress Report Millennium Development Goals. Pasig: National Economic Development Authority.

Gains, however, have not been enough to reach its MDG goal to reduce malnutrition down to 13.6 percent.⁴²

Malnutrition is an easily preventable condition but exacerbated by the lack of resources, facilities, equipment and training for health workers and volunteers.

One of the possible reasons that children stop attending school is hunger, as cited by teachers who participated in the FGDs, especially among the poor who have limited resources for their basic needs.⁴³

It's not clear if it is another possible reason for malnutrition or for children leaving school. According to the teachers surveyed, is that not enough jobs have been created to generate resources during the period to enable people to meet their daily nutritional needs.⁴⁴ The failure to address the problem has profound implications on children's cognitive abilities and success in education.

Chronic undernutrition remains an acute problem which damages to the "health, physical growth and brain development" of poor children, causing stunting in the first two years of life. Unfortunately, this is often "irreversible, impairing children for life and leaving them with lower IQ points and with lower chances of finishing school and becoming highly productive adults".⁴⁵

Data also shows undernourishment among 3.6 million children 0-59 months old (underweight) while reportedly up to 4 million stunted. Although the figure is lower than 20 years ago, the government has failed to reduce the figures by half and therefore has not reached its MDG goal.⁴⁶

The government has made immense progress in raising children's access to primary education. Over the last few years, there has been a significant increase in the net enrollment ratio of elementary school children from a low of 83.2 percent in SY 2006-2007 to 95.2 percent in SY 2012-2013.⁴⁷

42 Yacat, Jay. 2016. "Are Filipino Children Still at the Margins? Children's Rights Implementation under the Aquino Administration." UP Forum. 30 April. Available html <http://www.up.edu.ph/are-filipino-children-still-at-the-margins/>. Accessed on 14 October 2016.

43 Rodriguez, Fritzie. 2014. "Free breakfast for public school elementary students?" Rappler. 23 April. Available html <http://www.rappler.com/move-ph/issues/hunger/56098-bill-free-breakfast-public-school-students>.

44 Aquino, Tricia. 2015. "Which Millennium Development Goals is the PH likely to meet?" Interaksyon. Available html <http://interaksyon.com/article/112702/focus-which-millennium-development-goals-is-the-ph-likely-to-meet>.

45 UNICEF. 2016. Health and Nutrition. Available html https://www.unicef.org/philippines/health_nutrition.html.
46 https://www.unicef.org/philippines/health_nutrition.html

47 United Nations Development Programme. 2014. The Philippines Fifth Progress Report Millennium Development Goals. Pasig: National Economic Development Authority.

However, the “cohort survival rates and completion rates registered only minimal increases.” Data on secondary education was even lower as net enrollment ratio only increased from 60.4 percent to 64.61 percent.⁴⁸ Consequently, a great number of children do not earn a high school diploma. Those who complete their education often receive inferior education compared to middle- and upper-class children.

In the area of protection, the government has made progress; however, it still has to step up its efforts in some areas:⁴⁹

- The Anti-Bullying Act was passed in 2013, but the Anti-Corporal Punishment Bill is still under deliberation.
- 2013 data from the PNP shows 5,493 incidents of rape involving women and children. Adult and child data are lumped together rendering children invisible and vulnerable to be denied the help they deserve.
- The Anti-Child Pornography Bill was finally passed. However, a fifth of the estimated half-a-million sex workers in the country are minors involved in child sex tourism, which serves as one of the drivers of child pornography as commercially sexually exploited children are more prone to becoming victims of pornography.⁵⁰
- Children are trafficked for sex and forced labor including domestic work. In 2013, the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act was expanded to include sanctions for attempted trafficking and its accomplices.
- Facilities for male trafficking victims are non-existent. Only five out of 26 facilities can house male victims. They are often placed in shelters for Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). Male children are subject to bias; they are considered less vulnerable than their female counterparts and therefore are not given the same protection as female children.
- Children are the most vulnerable in situations of disaster and armed conflict. They are placed in congested evacuation centers and exposed to disease, poor water and sanitation facilities, and abuse.

48 Yacat, Jay. 2016. “Are Filipino Children Still at the Margins? Children’s Rights Implementation under the Aquino Administration.” UP Forum. 30 April. Available html <http://www.up.edu.ph/are-filipino-children-still-at-the-margins/>. Accessed on 15 October 2016.

49 Yacat, Jay. 2016. “Are Filipino Children Still at the Margins? Children’s Rights Implementation under the Aquino Administration.” UP Forum. 30 April. Available html <http://www.up.edu.ph/are-filipino-children-still-at-the-margins/>. Accessed on 15 October 2016.

50 Tacon, Dave. 2015. “Philippines’ Generation of Sex Tourism Children.” Al-Jazeera. 12 March. Available html <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2015/03/philippines-generation-sex-tourism-children-150305120628971.html>. Accessed on 15 October 2016.

- LGUs are now required to set up rehabilitation facilities for CICL. Twenty-one houses have been established nationwide. Of the 21, only 15 provide a suitable environment for rehabilitation and reintegration.
- The 17th Congress is pushing to lower the age of criminal responsibility to nine years old, which may compromise children's opportunity to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society.
- While there are adequate laws to protect the spectrum of rights of children in the Philippines, these are not fully realized due to lapses in enforcement and service delivery.

In early 2000, the National Action Plan entitled, "Functionally Literate Filipinos, An Educated Nation" was launched towards achieving the following priority tasks that are constrained by specific gaps in implementation:⁵¹

- **Make every school continuously perform better:** Budgetary and manpower problems contributing to the low achievement test scores of Filipino students must also be addressed.
- **Early Childhood Care and Development:** Make expansion of coverage yield more EFA benefits. The government has successfully established ECCD centers almost in all barangays but the enrollment rates are dismal. Only 51.3 percent were enrolled in the pre-primary program.⁵²
- **Teachers:** Promote practice of high quality teaching. An international paper cites that the quality of teachers and their grasp of English are deteriorating and they lack expertise in teaching areas.⁵³
- **Longer Cycle:** Adopt a 12-year program for formal basic education. A law was passed institutionalizing K-12 education but issues, such as the lack of programs for senior high school students as an example, must be tackled.
- **Accelerate articulation:** enrichment and development of the basic education curriculum in the context of the pillars of new functional literacy.⁵⁴

51 UNESCO. 2015. Education for All 2015: Implementation and Challenges. Available html http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Philippines/Philippines_EFA_MDA.pdf

52 Rodriguez, Fritzie. 2014. "The Children who can't Enter Kindergarten." Rappler. Available html <http://www.rappler.com/move-ph/issues/hunger/60985-kindergartners-philippines-education-poverty>.

53 Wilson, Karl. 2009. "Teachers blamed as English standards fall in Philippines." The National. Available html <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/asia-pacific/teachers-blamed-as-english-standards-fall-in-philippines>

54 Department of Education. No Date. Philippine Education for All 2015; Implementation and Challenges. Available html http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/efa/EFA_MDA/National_EFA_MDA_Reports/Philippines_EFA_MDA_FINAL.pdf

- **Funding:** Provide adequate and stable public funding for country-wide attainment of EFA goals; as an example, a funding framework that combines national and LGU funding to support cost-effective local initiatives to attain quality outcomes in all schools. Funding has to be further increased to make considerable improvements.
- **Governance:** Create a network of community-based groups to EFA goals in the local community. This knowledge-based movement endeavors to organize local groups to form a nationwide network of multi-sectoral groups that advocate and support the attainment of EFA goals.
- **Monitor progress in efforts towards attainment of EFA goals:** Of particular importance is the development and implementation of indicators of “quality education.”

Implementation of UNCRC

The fulfillment of children’s rights and human development is largely contingent on the ability of the government and its partners to address the issues discussed above, to enable the enjoyment of rights sans discrimination, and to empower vulnerable children to claim their rights.⁵⁵

Ensuring children’s rights requires a holistic approach that involves addressing structural (economic, political, and cultural) problems as well as everyday personal issues that children from poor families face. It also entails conforming to internationally agreed upon standards or treaties. According to the Philippine Alternative Report (AR) of 2009, many Filipino children remain to be in the margins of development instead of being at the center of it. The AR raises several important points.

Despite the Government’s focus on macro-economic concerns, data and analysis of the situation of children show that Philippine economic growth does not translate to growth and development in the lives of Filipino children.

In addition, debt servicing has taken away much-needed funding support for basic services such as health, education, and social services. Lack of resources has made anti-poverty strategies, short-term and palliative, and failing to sustainably address burgeoning poverty that affects millions of children.

⁵⁵ Goonesekere, Savitri and Rangita De Silva-De Alwis. 2005. “Women’s and Children’s Rights in a Human Rights Based Approach to Development. Working Paper. September. Available html <https://www.wcwonline.org/pdf/asia2007conf/Women's%20and%20Children's%20Rights%20in%20a%20Human%20Rights%20Based%20Approach.pdf>. Accessed on 13 October 2013.

Genuine compliance to the principles of the Convention must go beyond the enactment of laws. This should be supported by investments in funding, structural mechanisms and adequately trained personnel to enable proper, effective and efficient implementation of the UNCRC.

Majority of the people view children's rights in general as still not recognized because of inefficient information disseminated by various State institutions tasked to promote and protect children's welfare.

The State Party must reinforce its obligation to the UNCRC and exercise political will in fulfilling children's rights. The challenge is to go beyond minimum compliance by situating children at the center of the national development agenda.

The government must create and fund structures and systems, such as laws, policies, and processes which can "promote the ideal of respect for children's rights that create a climate in which state intervention is less necessary."⁵⁶ Moreover, it should also ensure that it creates favorable conditions to enable families and communities to provide the needs of children.

Legal Framework for Child Protection

Fifteen years before UN adopted the CRC, the Philippines enacted Presidential Decree (PD) No. 603 or the UN Child and Youth Welfare Code whose articles prefigure many of the articles contained in the UNCRC.

The UNCRC was ratified in 1990, which led to mainstreaming children's issues in government planning. This gave birth to developmental plans that guided both government and child-focused civil society organizations in planning and programming for children:

- 1990 Philippine Plan of Action for Children (PPAC) that enabled children's issues to be incorporated into the Medium-Term Development Plan of government
- Child 21, a strategic framework which guides stakeholders in planning and prioritizing programs and interventions for children⁵⁷

56 Goonesekere, Savitri and Rangita De Silva-De Alwis. 2005. "Women's and Children's Rights in a Human Rights Based Approach to Development. Working Paper. September. Available html <https://www.wcwonline.org/pdf/asia2007conf/Women's%20and%20Children's%20Rights%20in%20a%20Human%20Rights%20Based%20Approach.pdf>. Accessed on 13 October 2013.

57 Council for the Welfare of Children. 2000. Child 21: A Legacy to the Filipino Children of the 21st Century, Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children, 2000-2005.

- The National Plans of Action for Children (NPAC) of 2005-2022, which concretizes the vision of Child 21 and harmonizes the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the World Fit for Children goals and targets⁵⁸

The State has also made significant strides in enacting laws that promote the survival, development, protection, and participation rights of children. The country is cited for its legal frameworks that address child abuse, juvenile justice, child labor, child domestic work, child pornography, malnutrition, and emergency relief and protection.⁵⁹ Table 4 shows select Philippine laws that address children's rights.

Notably, laws on the protection of children outnumber the laws promoting their survival rights. Inadequate investment is apparent from ill-equipped and underfunded healthcare facilities often found in local communities, putting children's welfare at risk.

In the area of development, the State has passed laws that support Early Childhood Education and Development. It has also institutionalized kindergarten as part of basic education, which now enables all children regardless of socioeconomic status to enjoy preschool education.

Recently, the government added an extra two years in high school to conform to international education standards. Laws that provide scholarships and paid summer work to help less fortunate students have also been passed (see Table 7).

Recognizing children's capacity to contribute to the political, social, and cultural life of their communities and nation, the Philippines passed laws to improve children's capacity to participate in society. One of the promising laws that Philippine Congress passed was *Sangguniang Kabataan*, which enables children to engage in the political exercise of voting for representatives of their sector in governance. Since various sectors have called for either its abolition or overhaul to address criticisms, recent substantial changes have been adopted in its structure.⁶⁰

58 Yacat, Jay. 2011. *Child Protection in the Philippines: A Situational Analysis*. Bangkok: Save the Children.

59 Calica, Aurea. 2016. "Law Improving Children's Protection Signed." *Philippine Star*. 19 May 2016. Available html <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2016/05/19/1584756/law-improving-childrens-protection-signed>. Accessed on 14 October 2016.

60 Ladia, Charles. 2014. *Why the Sangguniang Kabataan Needs an Overhaul*. *Rappler*. 27 September. Available html <http://www.rappler.com/move-ph/ispeak/70347-sangguniang-kabataan-needs-overhaul>.

Table 4. Select Laws that Address the Rights of Children

Laws	Title	Date of
	Over all Rights of Children	
PD No 603	Child Youth and Welfare Code	1974
	Right to Development	
RA No. 10533	An Act Enhancing the Philippine Education System by Strengthening its Curriculum and Increasing the number of years for basic education	May 2013
RA No. 10410	An Act Recognizing the Age from Zero (0) to Eight (8) Years as the First Crucial Stage of Educational Development and Strengthening ECCD System	March 2013
RA No. 10157	An Act Institutionalizing Kindergarten Education into the Basic Education System	January 2012
RA No. 7323	An Act to Help Poor but Deserving Students pursue their Education by Encouraging their Employment during Summer or Christmas Vacations through Incentives granted to Employers	March 1992
RA No. 6655	An Act Establishing and Providing for Free Public Secondary Education for other purpose	May 1988
	Right to Participation	
RA No. 7160	Local Government Code of the Philippines: Sangguniang Kabataan	January 1992
RA No 8044	An Act Creating the National Youth Commission, Establishing a National Comprehensive and Coordinated Program on Youth Development	June 1995
	Right to Protection	
RA No 7610	Special Protection of Children	June 1992
RA No. 7277	Magna Cara for Disabled Persons that contains provisions on special education for children, health services for disabled children, prosthetic devices, family care, alternative care, and foster care services	March 1992
RA No. 7658	Age of Employment of Children that prohibits the employment of children below 15 years old	Nov 1993
RA No 8972	Solo Parents Welfare Act that provides comprehensive package of social services for solo parents and their children	November 2000
RA No. 9231	Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Dec 2003
RA No. 9344	Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act	April 2006
RA No 9252	Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act	March 2004
RA No 108211	Children's Emergency and Relief Protection Act	May 2016
	Right to Survival	
RA No 10152	An Act of Providing for Mandatory Basic Immunization Services for Infants and Children, Repealing for the Purpose Presidential Decree No. 966	June 2011

RA No. 7848	An Act Requiring Compulsory immunization against Hepatitis-B for infants and Children below 8 years old	December 1994
PD No. 1569	Strengthening the Barangay Nutrition Program	June 1978

The government has also set up committees to monitor the situation of children and established structures to protect children. For instance, it set up the LSWDO, Women and Children Protection Desks (WCPD) with the Philippine National Police (PNP), Local Councils for the Protection of Children (LCPCs), and Child Protection Committees (CPCs) in schools and communities. Despite the existence of such legal frameworks and structures, children still do not have universal enjoyment of their rights due to manpower (lack of adequate training), resource constraints, and the failure of local officials to prioritize it.

Overview of Child Rights in Bicol Region

Bicol Region is located 200 kilometers south of Manila. It has a total land area of 17,362 square kilometers representing 5.67% share of the Philippines in terms of land area. It is composed of six provinces (Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate, and Sorsogon), seven cities, 107 municipalities, and 3,471 barangays.⁶¹

In 2015, Bicol Region had a population of 5,796,989, with a growth rate at 1.04 percent.⁶² The Province of Camarines Sur share the largest population with 1.95 million, followed by Albay with 1.31 million, Masbate with 892,000, Sorsogon with 793,000, and Camarines Norte with 583,000. Catanduanes has the smallest population with 261,000.⁶³ The population tends to be larger in the more economically progressive provinces since they become areas for in-migration. On average, a family is composed of four children.⁶⁴

Around 40.8 percent of the population is aged 0 to 14 years old, which mirrors national figures. The majority of the population can be found in rural areas (56 percent)⁶⁵ where the available employment is usually in agriculture or fisheries. Rural areas are usually

61 Philippine Statistics Authority. No Date. Country Stat Philippines Regional Profile: Bicol. Available html <http://countrystat.psa.gov.ph/?cont=16&r=5>. Accessed on 15 October 2016.

62 Philippine Statistics Authority. 2016. "Population of Region V - Bicol (Based on the 2015 Census of Population)" 4 June. Available html <https://psa.gov.ph/content/population-region-v-bicol-based-2015-census-population>. Accessed on 15 October 2016.

63 Philippine Statistics Authority. 2016. "Population of Region V - Bicol (Based on the 2015 Census of Population)" 4 June. Available html <https://psa.gov.ph/content/population-region-v-bicol-based-2015-census-population>. Accessed on 15 October 2016.

64 Republic of the Philippines. 2011. Bicol Regional Development Plan, 2011-2016. Manila: Republic of the Philippines. Available html http://www.neda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/RegV_RDP_2011-2016.pdf. Accessed on 15 October 2016.

65 Index Mundi. 2016. Philippines Demographic Profile 2016. Available html http://www.indexmundi.com/philippines/demographics_profile.html

composed of municipalities that have an annual income of less than PhP80 million⁶⁶ making these resource-poor communities.

Bicol had a high employment rate at 94.2 percent in 2009. However, of the number employed, 36.2 percent of them were underemployed, which means people worked in low paying jobs that did not utilize their skill set. Some 37 percent are laborers and unskilled workers, which is explained by data that only 41 percent of the employed reached or finished elementary, while 38 percent reached or finished high school. A small 21 percent reached or finished elementary school.⁶⁷ The low skill set of people, the region's underdeveloped agricultural industry, and intermittent calamities, have suppressed economic growth in the region.



The region is the 8th poorest region in the country as of 2015.⁶⁸ Around 34.1 percent or 3 out of 10 of the population is poor,⁶⁹ higher than the national poverty figures. Sorsogon placed 9th in the top 10 poorest provinces,⁷⁰ the only province in the region that made it to the list. The average annual family income in the region is PhP152,000.⁷¹ Half of the poor families in Bicol do not own the land they occupy, with many living in makeshift houses located on public lands, along riverbanks, railroad tracks, and in high disaster risk areas.

66 Philippine Statistics Authority. 2016. Income Classification for Municipalities, Cities, and Provinc- es. http://nap.psa.gov.ph/activestats/psgc/articles/con_income.asp

67 Republic of the Philippines. 2011. Bicol Regional Development Plan, 2011-2016. Manila: Republic of the Philippines. Available html http://www.neda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/RegV_RDP_2011-2016.pdf. Accessed on 15 October 2016.

68 Bonquin, Carolyn. 2015. "Which regions, provinces, cities are Philippines' richest?" ABS CBN Online. Available html <http://news.abs-cbn.com/focus/11/18/15/which-regions-provinces-cities-are-philippines-richest>.

69 Arguillas, Carolyn. 2013. "ARMM is poorest region in 2012 but poverty incidence dropped in island provinces." MIn- danews. 28 April. Availa-ble html <http://www.mindanews.com/governance/2013/04/armm-is-poorest-region-in-2012-but-poverty-incidence-dropped-in-island-provinces/>.

70 Bonquin, Carolyn. 2015. "Which regions, provinces, cities are Philippines' richest?" ABS CBN Online. Available html

71 <http://news.abs-cbn.com/focus/11/18/15/which-regions-provinces-cities-are-philippines-richest>. Philippine Statistics Authority. 2012. Quick-Stat on Bicol. April. Available html https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/attachments/ird/quickstat/reg05_apr_2012.pdf

Many houses do not have potable water and sanitation facilities.⁷²

One of the effects of poverty on children is malnutrition. In the 0 to 5 years old category, Western Visayas (19.3 percent), Bicol (18.6 percent), and SOCCSKSARGEN (18.2 percent) regions recorded the highest number of underweight children. Catanduanes and Camarines Sur have the highest incidences of malnutrition in the region according to the National Nutrition Council (NNC). There is a high incidence of malnourishment for pre-school and elementary school students. Masbate City had the most number of malnourished preschool children with 2,278 cases or 13.67 percent out of 16,666 total weighed in the Bicol Region.

However, the regional DSWD office has initiated a feeding program to benefit 146,148 pre-schoolers enrolled in 4,372 day-care centers of 108 local government units in the region to arrest developmental delays and cognitive impairment among young children.

There is also a Feeding Program run by elementary schools, which is part of nationwide feeding program by the DepEd, to address hunger and malnutrition; however, it might be too late by then to arrest cognitive impairment since the early years of feeding children nutritious food are considered for development. Nevertheless, the program is still commendable since it addresses the issue of hunger, which is one of the cited reasons for dropping out. However, teachers lament that their daily provision can only feed the severely undernourished, and there are still countless other hungry children who are not covered by the program because of the lack of resources.

The Municipal Nutrition Council (MNC) is another key organization in the LGU because of its role in eradicating hunger, reducing the number of underweight children, and improving people's health in the community through nutrition. However, not all MNCs in the communities are adequately functional to make an impact.

Because of the economic situation of Bicol, civil society organizations (CSOs) are naturally drawn to the region. CSOs are recognized as government partners in running programs for the marginalized. Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) regional director Arnel Garcia notes that they are "active partners in the pursuit of local autonomy especially in the delivery of basic services, capability-building, livelihood projects and

72 Republic of the Philippines. 2011. Bicol Regional Development Plan, 2011-2016. Manila: Republic of the Philippines. Available html http://www.neda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/RegV_RDP_2011-2016.pdf. Accessed on 15 October 2016.

development of local enterprises designed, among others, to enhance the well-being of the people.”⁷³

Most CSOs in Bicol are people’s organizations (POs), except for Camarines Sur where there are more NGOs than POs. Table 5 below breaks down the number of CSOs in the region, except for Masbate where there is no available data.

Table 5. Civil Society Organizations in the Bicol Region 2013⁷⁴

Province	Number of CSOs
Albay	71
Camarines Norte	26
Camarines Sur	50
Catanduanes	30
Sorsogon	42
Masbate	No data

Role of LCPCs in Programming for Children

Compared to other LGUs, Naga City has the most comprehensive legal framework for child protection. The city has a holistic approach to child rights in that their programs cater to the indivisible and interdependent nature of children’s rights. The Naga City Council for the Welfare and Protection of Children (NCCWPC) was specifically established to serve as the prime mover of child protection in the city that uses a multi-pronged approach to addressing their development, participation, protection, and survival needs.

The NCCWPC acts as an Oversight Committee to monitor children’s programs and integrates children’s programs with existing community program. The Council also helps LGU agencies in planning, monitoring, and evaluating child-appropriate programs. ⁷⁵Annual work and financial plans and the preparation of local legislative agenda for children are also developed by the NCCWPC. A status of children report is submitted

⁷³ Philippine Information Agency. 2016. “DSWD pushes for accreditation of civil society organizations in Bicol.” Available html <http://news.pia.gov.ph/article/view/3211464162208/dswd-pushes-for-accreditation-of-civil-society-organizations-in-bi-col#sthash.tT9Osaa0.dpuf>

⁷⁴ AUSAID. 2013. Profile of Civil Society Organizations in Bicol, Western Visayas and Northern Mindanao. Available html Profile of Civil Society Organizations in Bicol, Western Visayas and Northern Mindanao

⁷⁵ Ordinance No. 2014-068. An Ordinance Institutionalizing the NCCWPC, Creating the Children’s Affairs Office, Defining their Functions, Appropriating Funds for their Operations, and for Other Purposes. Available html <http://naga.gov.ph/sp-mat-ters/ordinances/ordinance-no-2014-068/>.

quarterly to Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) for monitoring purposes. The setup provides an ideal environment for the protection of children’s rights.

LCPCs play a crucial role in the “synchronization and integration of policies, programs, and projects for children in their respective localities and the planning and spearheading of projects to make the locality child-friendly.”⁷⁶ Unfortunately, LCPCs are reportedly absent or non-functional in some municipalities. According to UNICEF, 82.6 percent of provinces have functioning LCPCs.

However, the figures drop to 67.48 percent for functioning Municipal Council for the Protection of Children (MCPC) and 52.2 percent for the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC). LCPCs are important because they bring the Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children or Child 21 to the level of the community.



The National Government launched in 2014, “a series of strategies that would help achieve the vision of a child-friendly Philippines,” as it realized the crucial role of LGUs in service delivery.⁷⁷ When LCPCs are highly functional, there is a greater likelihood that programs for children are given precedence in the local community: children are kept in schools; they are provided free healthcare, and the LGU works with civil society organizations for the children’s benefit.

76 UNICEF. 2010. “Localizing Child Protection: Does the Local Council for the Protection of Children Matter?” Policy Brief No. 7. Available html http://www.unicef.org/philippines/brief07_fnl.pdf.

77 Francisco, Katerina. 2010. “Does your local government protect children? Rappler. Available html <https://www.rappler.com/nation/71426-child-friendly-philippines>

In many areas in the region, LCPCs suffer from minimal functionality or non-functionality (close to half have no LCPCs from the provincial to the barangay levels). In most cases, LGUs establish LCPCs because of the directive from DILG. However, officials managing the Council may not have enough knowledge or skills on the principles of children's rights, children's rights framework, and program planning for children. Often, local officials have received, if at all, inadequate training, resulting in gaps in providing a comprehensive and holistic programming for children.

In areas where the LCPCs actually work, NGOs give the necessary push to LGUs to give children precedence in local programming or they provide the resources and expertise, which LGUs lack. CSOs also carry out advocacy and capacity-building programs for the LGU officials on children's rights.

Unfortunately, some LGUs covered in the study give little attention to children's programming, especially in smaller municipalities because of a host of different reasons: "lack" of resources; prioritization of other projects because children do not deliver votes; lack of social workers in communities; and the non-functionality or minimal functionality of LCPCs.

Moreover, LGUs are legally authorized to access funds for children's investment from the 20 percent Development Fund from IRA; the 10 percent SK Fund; the 1 percent Children's Fund for LCPC; a portion of the 1 percent PWD Fund, 5 percent GAD Fund, and a portion of the LGU General Fund and the Special Education Fund. However, an interplay of factors constrains this, among them: lack of commitment of LCEs in children's programming; unawareness of funding sources; and the size of the LGU as well as its annual income. The latter becomes a problem with lower category cities and municipalities because they cannot collect enough revenues to fund programs for children.

Legal and Policy Development for Children in Bicol

The section discusses how LGUs have adopted laws, ordinances, and development programs for children that have bearing on their right to education.

National laws are essential child protection tools that must be reflected in local ordinances to ensure prioritization of children in local governance. Child-friendly cities and municipalities usually have counterpart legislation that reflect national legislation to ensure the inclusion of children's issues in program planning and development and to ensure compliance.

For instance, the City Council of Naga City, an LGU consistently hailed as a child-friendly city, passed several important pieces of legislation⁷⁸ on education. The law on the creation of a local council for the protection of children reflects a similar national legislation. Table 6 lists local policies that Naga City passed in relation to children’s rights.

The Council also enacted legislation to increase and improve access to education⁷⁹ of its youth⁸⁰ (see Table below) complemented by other ordinances that promote other children’s rights. Naga has established an enabling environment for child-friendly programming, with its Local Development Plan for Children and the activation of their LCPCs and BCPCs. Moreover, it allocates a substantial portion of its budget to children’s welfare.⁸¹

The passage of such ordinances shows the role of innovative officials play in promoting children’s rights within their communities. It also shows how the support of LGU officials is crucial to children-friendly programs. This contributes to creating a policy and programmatic environment favorable to children’s welfare. The City Council also took an important step by legally creating a Council for the Welfare of Children office that serves as a clearing house for all programs and projects benefiting children.

Table 6. Ordinances Passed by the Naga City Council Related to Children’s Rights

Ordinance No	Title	Description	Associated Programs
2015-012	Naga City Education Code	Consolidates the policies and programs of the city on education from early education to tertiary education and alternative education.	The Ordinance consolidates city policies and programs on early, tertiary, and alternative education. The City has an Educare program and Schools for Early Education and Development (SEED) Program. It provides quality education through the City’s subsidized Educare centers and Montessori type schools. The City also has programs to improve the quality of basic education such as the Quality Universal Education Empowerment in Naga (QUEEN), the Sanggawadan Program, the Summer Enhancement and Enrichment Program (SEEP), and the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program. The Education Code of Naga City mandates that the city commits itself to Anti-Truancy and Anti-Corporal Punishment Campaigns.

78 Legacion, Nelson. 2016. “SP Highlights: Sanggawadan Ordinance.” Bicol Mail. 8 September. Available html <http://www.bicolmail.com/2012/?p=27348>.

79 Legacion, Nelson. 2015. “SP: Highlights: Education Code.” Bicol Mail. 13 March. Available html <http://www.bicolmail.com/2012/?p=20124>.

80 Naga City Council. 2013. Ordinance No 2013-003. Available html <http://naga.gov.ph/sp-matters/ordinances/ordinance-no-2013-003/>

81 UNICEF. No Date. Educare: Nurturing Naga’s Future through Excellent Learning Foundation. Available html <http://www.unicef.org/philippines/COPC-FLG-NagaCity.pdf>.

2001-039	Naga City Children's Welfare Code	Adheres to the 1987 Constitution that lays down the State's responsibility to the rights and welfare of children. The Ordinance prioritizes children in programming and recognizes the primary role of parents or legal guardians in child rearing.	Provides survival, development, protection, and participation programs for children.
2016-043	Sanggawadan Ordinance	Provides rice subsidies, school fees, and school supplies to parents in order to help them send their children to school.	Free hospitalization, death or burial assistance, housing assistance, livelihood loans, and values formation training to parents of the children-beneficiaries. It also created an office dedicated to the implementation of the program. Devoted social workers screen beneficiaries and ensure the proper delivery of services
2013-003	Solo Parents Ordinance	The ordinance is in consonance with Republic Act (RA) 8972 or the Solo Parents' Act of 2000, which assists single parents in raising their family especially poor families.	Livelihood assistance, guidance through counseling and critical stress debriefing, Tertiary Scholarship assistance, prioritization in the Sanggawadan Program, membership in the city's Quality Universal Elementary and High School Education in Naga that ensures all children will have access to and will complete quality elementary and high school education.
2014-068	Naga City Council for the Welfare and Protection of Children (NCCWPC)	The Ordinance paved the way for the creation of the NCCWPC	Institutionalizes the Naga City Council for the Welfare and Protection of Children (NCCWPC) as the policymaking and planning body of the City Government of Naga on programs and activities promoting the welfare of children and protecting their rights. NCCWPC shall also serve as the evaluator of all programs, projects and policies affecting children.

Camarines Norte, on the other hand, has developed a Provincial Code for Children that consolidates all ordinances, laws, and issuances related to children. The Province has joined the Child Friendly Movement (CFM) that oversees the compliance of municipalities to produce development and investment plans, children's codes, and state of the children's report.⁸²

82 Manlangit, RB. 2005. "CFM Institutionalization Underway in Camarines Norte." Philippine Information Agency. 23 September. Available html <http://archives.pia.gov.ph/?m=12&sec=reader&rp=3&fi=p050923.htm&no=27&date=09/23/2005>

The CFM enables the government to set targets and gauge their achievements.”⁸³It serves as a guide in creating local codes for children.⁸⁴ The cities and municipalities of Camarines Norte have also drafted development plans and local investment plans for children as required by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). The DILG has authorized the utilization of one percent of the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) in Memorandum Circular 2012-120, to strengthen the implementation of programs, projects, and activities of LCPCs including the preparation of local development and investment plans, local codes for children, local state of children’s reports, and the conduct of advocacies for the promotion of children’s rights. These documents provide clear plans and targets to ensure children’s rights in the province.



Cited as hotspots for child labor, the provinces of Masbate and Sorsogon have instituted programs to address the problem. Masbate passed a provincial ordinance supporting programs and services to prevent and eliminate child labor in the province, which also includes education as a preventive and intervention tool.⁸⁵

The province has also organized the Masbate Provincial Child Labor Committee. These came about after the New York-based Human Rights Watch released a report on children

83 UNICEF. 2006. Manual of Child Friendly Schools. Available html http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Child_Friendly_Schools_Manual_EN_040809.pdf

84 Manlangit, RB. 2005. "CFM Institutionalization Underway in Camarines Norte." Philippine Information Agency.23 September. Available html <http://archives.pia.gov.ph/?m=12&sec=reader&rp=3&fi=p050923.htm&no=27&date=09/23/2005>

85 Provincial Planning and Development Office. 2013. Annual Accomplishment Report CY 2013. Available html <http://masbate.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/PPDO-2013-Annual-Accomplishment-Report.pdf>.

being recruited in gold mines. Apart from this, the province has also organized a Child Friendly Movement and the Provincial Council for the Protection of Children to evaluate and oversee programs and services for children. Sorsogon Province along with Albay and other Bicol Provinces have organized the Provincial Inter-Agency Anti Child Labor Committee and Sagip Batang Mangagawa Quick Action Team,⁸⁶ which protect children from exploitation and provide necessary intervention programs such as education or livelihood assistance or training.

The City of Legazpi in the meantime, has instituted some programs that benefit children as part of its Gender and Development Plan (GAD). Interestingly, Albay is the only “province in the country with a fully institutionalized Provincial Education Division (PED) approved by the Civil Service Commission and the Department of Budget and Management.”⁸⁷

This was created by a Provincial Board ordinance that seeks to ensure program consistency and continuity in education. In 2013,⁸⁸ it supported community-based services such as Unlad Kabataan, Peer Group Services, and the Pag-asa Youth Association of the Philippines (an OSY association comprised of 15-24 year old young people). It has also pushed for the implementation of the ECCD in communities by constructing and repairing ECCD facilities and hiring staff. Educational scholarships and financial assistance are given to indigent children and OSY for short-term courses as part of its Sulong Dunong Program. However, when lumping children’s programs with their GAD Plan potentially makes one sector ‘invisible’ in programming, as the needs of both are assumed as the same. Similarly, devising a one-size-fits-all program may also overlook children’s special needs.

86 Guhit, Irma. 2011. Provincial Inter-Agency Anti Child Labor committee reports accomplishments

87 Philippine Star. 2015. “Albay a Model for Basic Education-DepEd.” 20 July. Available html <http://www.philstar.com/business/2015/07/20/1478745/albay-model-basic-education-deped>

88 Legazpi City Local Government. 2013. Annual Gender and Development Plan (GAD) Accomplishment Report F& 2013. Available html http://legazpi.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/AGAD_2013.pdf

Situation of Education as a Right in Bicol and its Contribution to the Achievement of Other Child Rights

The country has a high attrition rates for both grade school and high school but especially so for high school. Poverty is the underlying cause of dropping out, made even worse when adults of the household have had little to no education at all.⁸⁹

Economic insecurity of poorer households forces families to prioritize their survival needs over their children's schooling. Children may even be tapped to work to support the family's livelihood, which in Bicol are usually agriculture or fisheries. Rural areas have higher incidence of children not in school.⁹⁰

In Bicol, the following factors affect children's rights to, in, and through education:

- Debt servicing is hindering the education budget to be at international standards.
- Special Education Funds (SEF) at local governments are severely limited.
- There are inefficiencies in executing the allocated budget.
- The education sector is vulnerable to disasters and emergencies.

In terms of access, below hinders children to their rights to education:

- There is a classroom shortage.
- High schools are only located in town centers.
- Indirect or personal costs to education remain high.
- Children are unprepared to enter formal education.
- Bicolano children engage in labor and employment.

89 Maligalig, Dalisay S, Rhona B. Caoili-Rodriguez, Arturo Martinez, Jr., and Sining Cuevas. 2010. "Education Outcomes in the Philippines." ADB Economics Working Paper Series.No. 1999.

90 Albert, Jose Ramon. 2012. Basic Education in Albay: An Analytical Brief. Philippine Institute of Development Studies. August 2012-09. Avail-able <http://dirp3.pids.gov.ph/ris/pn/pidspn1209.pdf>

In terms of quality, hindrances to children’s rights in education include:

- Teachers lack in number, in training, and in incentives.
- Many schools are unable to provide a child-centered, conducive learning environment.
- Curricular reforms meet challenges in implementation.

Finally, in terms of realizing children’s rights through education, certain aspects of Philippine culture are hindering education from leading to the fulfillment of other children’s rights in survival, development, protection and participation. This chapter discusses each factor in detail in the following pages.

General Issues on Education as a Bicolano Child’s Right

Debt Servicing is Hindering Higher Education Budget

Some have described Philippine education as being in a state of protracted crisis with government’s inability to adequately invest in education. Problems have manifested in the form of high rates of drop-outs across the system, poor performance in national and international achievement tests; poor reading abilities and functional literacy of older students; lack of student preparedness for study in high school and university as revealed in diagnostic tests and entrance exams; and, the recognition by the business community of declining abilities of Filipino workers in language proficiency, technical skills, and ability to consider and solve problems.⁹¹

Various administrations from the 90s to early 2000s have prioritized debt servicing over the education budget as can be seen in Table 7.⁹²

Table 7. Expenditures on Education and Debt Servicing, 1981-2005

Particulars	Marcos 1981-1985	Aquino 1986-1992	Ramos 1993-1998	Estrada 1999-2000	Arroyo 2001-2005
Education	1.8	2.7	3.3	3.6	2.9
Debt Servicing	1.5	5.6	4.0	3.9	5.1

Source: Diokno (2010)

91 Arcangel, Xianne. 2016. "DepEd's Bigger Budget for 2017 for K-12's full implementation.- Briones." GMA New-sonline. 2 September. Avail-able html <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/579934/news/nation/deped-s-bigger-budget-for-2017-for-k-12-s-full-implementation-briones>.

92 Diokno, Benjamin. 2010. "Philippine Fiscal Behavior in Recent History." Philippine Review of Economics.46(1): June., pp 39-87. Available html <http://pre.econ.upd.edu.ph/index.php/pre/article/viewFile/645/4>. Accessed on 11 October 2016.

In comparison, states with high human development indexes spend at least 4.6 percent of their GDP on education. Despite the constitutional mandate to give the largest budget to education, this has not happened because according to the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC), successive governments from the time of Marcos have “adopted the neo-liberal model of development which has been imposed globally by global [capitalism].”⁹³

Administrations were also bound by Section 26B, Book VI of Executive Order 292 or the 1987 Revised Administrative Code, which provides for the automatic appropriation of budget for Debt Servicing.⁹⁴

While there have been steady increases in budgets for education, the share it gets out of the national budget has remained relatively the same and still falls below international standards. The country lags behind other Asian countries in terms of expenditures for education (see Table 8 below)⁹⁵ and way below the UN Standard of allotting at least 6 percent of the country’s GDP for education. Low investments in education are the root cause of the various problems plaguing the education system.

Table 8. Comparative Public Expenditure on Education (percent of GDP) of Select Asian Countries

Country	2012
Vietnam	6.6
Thailand	5.8
Malaysia	5.1
South Korea	5.0
Indonesia	2.8
Philippines	2.7

Source: World Bank (2013)

DepEd allocated a total of PhP667,116,000 for Bicol high schools in 2016. Elementary Schools, on the other hand, had a larger budget at PhP11,395,910,000. The national government allocated PhP278M for its Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program in Bicol. The ALS provides school dropouts and out-of-school youth (OSY) and children the opportunity to continue their education through non-formal means.

93 Freedom from Debt Coalition. 2013. “Social Debt to education mounts as State relinquishes role to private business.” 10 June.

94 Executive Order 292, Section 26B, Book VI. Available html <http://www.gov.ph/1987/07/25/executive-order-no-292-book-vi-chapter-4-budget-authori-zation/>

95 World Bank (2013). “World Development Indicators 2013.” Washington, D.C.: World Bank. <http://data.worldbank.org>. Accessed on 22 Sep 2016.

Special Education Funds are Severely Limited

Through RA 7160 or the Local Government Code of 1991, Local School Boards (LSB) were created in cities and municipalities across the country. Their main duty is to allocate the Special Education Fund (SEF) to meet the supplementary needs of the local public school system, or needs that cannot be funded by the national government. This is part of the devolution of education, enabling local communities to make independent decisions on critical concerns.



The SEF is an additional 1 percent levy tax on the assessed value of real property, which LGUs are required by law to use for education purposes. It should be automatically released to the LSB. In the case of provinces, the proceeds are equally divided between the provincial and municipal school boards. The fund can be allocated for: maintenance and other operating expenses, capital outlay and personnel salaries; repair/maintenance and construction of school buildings; and sports and other co-curricular activities and programs of the DepEd. Most LSBs allocate the budget for infrastructure projects. This is true for bigger cities that collect bigger real property taxes whose tax collection is large enough to fund building construction or repair.

Devolving some of the decision-making on resources was borne out of the idea that stakeholders at the local level are in the best position to identify the needs of local schools.

However, because of the Filipino culture that values hierarchy and seniority, Local Chief Executives and Schools Division Superintendent (SDS), tasked with representing the interests of their constituencies, are still the most influential voices in the Board and in decision-making.⁹⁶

Shortages in resources also limit the Board's capacity to create greater impact. In third to fifth class municipalities, LSBs would only have PhP150,000 to PhP350,000 as the community's SEF. The amount is enough for repairs but not to finish one classroom, let alone provide for the various needs of different schools in the municipality. Most LSBs only meet once a year to discuss funding allocation.

With these limitations, the LSB has little room to allocate available funds for the actual needs of all schools in their area. In the Region, the school divisions often use the limited SEF budget for sports events or other division-wide school activities or sometimes for their MOOE needs, if funds are still available, according to participants of the Validation Workshop.

In many municipalities, schools remain dependent on capital outlay and MOOE from the National Government because SEFs from LGUs are severely limited. The DepEd Regional Office then allocates funds to schools with bigger student populations.

Dependence on the national government budget also entails enduring late funding releases for construction and maintenance needs. For instance, when a devastating typhoon hit the region and destroyed classrooms in December 2016, the DepEd Central Office committed to finance the construction of Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS), structures put-up for short-term use while schools await the rehabilitation of permanent classrooms. Each TLS unit has a budget of PhP60,000. However, two months after the devastating typhoon, funds have yet to be released, according to participants of the Validation Workshop with teachers from the Region.

The LSB has yet to transcend beyond its basic function as a budgeting entity towards becoming a catalyst for change. However, it remains "the most logical vehicle for reform." Because it is already institutionalized, and needs only to strengthen itself through support from an executive who champions education; placing monitoring and performance measures; and, most importantly, creating participative plans based on evidence.⁹⁷

96 Robredo, Jesse. No Date. "Reinventing School Boards in the Philippines." Available html http://www.naga.gov.ph/cityhall/SCHOOL_BOARD.pdf

97 Ibid.

There are Inefficiencies in Executing the Education Budget

Despite budgetary reforms in education, DepEd has been unable to spend all of its appropriations from 2011 to 2015, spending only about 86.7 percent of its total budget.⁹⁸

An Asian Development Bank (ADB) study points out the low budget execution ratios (i.e. obligation-to-allotment ratios) for MOOE and capital outlays and the existence of lapsed appropriations. This means that the budget is not being spent for what they were intended for or there were delays in its execution.⁹⁹

The ADB explains: Overall budget execution in 2013 was 96.1 percent, although it was only 79.3 percent for MOOE and 81.7 percent for capital outlays. Budget execution has been adversely affected by complex administrative procedures for hiring teachers and procuring textbooks.

In 2007, for instance, hiring and deploying new teachers required 12 steps that involved the central office and regional offices of both Education and Budget Departments, as well as the division offices of DepEd and the Civil Service Commission (CSC). These steps took at least 12 months to complete.

Similarly, in 2006 procuring textbooks from tender to delivery took 17 months. The pre-procurement process to evaluate titles took six months alone. DepEd consultations with Congress on schools and districts to receive new classrooms add delay to the school construction.

Failing to spend allocated budget means inefficiencies in planning and missed opportunities in enacting the necessary reforms needed in education. This has resulted in “backlogs in school seats, hiring teachers, procuring instructional materials, anticipated increase in enrollment and the demands of the new curriculum.”¹⁰⁰

This could also be contributing to the problems in the implementation of many DepEd reforms, such as the Basic Education Reform Agenda (BESRA). Forged in 2006 as a comprehensive and sector-wide reform package, BESRA aims to change the entire education

98 Arcangel, Xianne. 2016. “DepEd’s Bigger Budget for 2017 for K-12’s full implementation.- Briones.” GMA New-sonline. 2 September. Available html <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/579934/news/nation/dep-ed-s-bigger-budget-for-2017-for-k-12-s-full-implementation-briones>.

99 Asian Development Bank. No Date. Senior High School Support Program (RRP PHI 45089), Program Expenditure and Financing Assessment. Available html <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/45089-002-pef.pdf>.

100 Arcangel, Xianne. 2016. “DepEd’s Bigger Budget for 2017 for K-12’s full implementation.- Briones.” GMA New-sonline. 2 September. Available html <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/579934/news/nation/dep-ed-s-bigger-budget-for-2017-for-k-12-s-full-implementation-briones>.

sector through engaging stakeholder participation, defining teacher competencies, complementing educational programs, and re-organizing DepEd's structure. BESRA has yet to reach its full potential due to reported problems in implementation.¹⁰¹

Education Secretary Leonor Briones vowed to address the issue by “focusing on improving the way the department spends its funds.”¹⁰²

With the education budget steadily growing, some funds are reportedly lost to corruption at the national and local levels of DepEd. This may come in the form of overpriced textbooks, computers, supplies, or construction of buildings.¹⁰³ Effects of corruption manifest directly on children and reach far into a community's future.

Validation Workshop participants state an example. Computers for computer laboratories have broken down a few months after delivery and have not been repaired due to lack of budgetary allocation for computer maintenance. While these are not necessarily direct results of corruption, these may be possible symptoms. In other regions, some education officials have been charged for “ghost” textbook deliveries, inferior and overpriced computer units, and rigged bidding for DepEd supplies.

Education is Vulnerable to Disasters, Risks and Emergencies

Bicol is situated along the typhoon belt and the Pacific Ring of Fire, making it highly vulnerable to disasters. There are several active volcanoes in the region that have erupted several times in the past, causing disruption in the lives of community members. Because the Region is frequented by disasters, provinces in the region have become more responsive to and prepared for natural disasters.

For instance, the Provincial Local Government of Albay has institutionalized a permanent Disaster Risk Management Office, enabling it to plan and strategize for disasters and emergencies. The province has also built capacities at the city, municipal and barangay levels to lessen vulnerabilities of their respective localities.¹⁰⁴

101 Bautista, Ma. Cynthia Rose, Allan Bernardo, and Dina Ocampo. 2009. “When Reforms Don't Transform Reflections on Institutional Reforms in the Department of Education.” Human Development Network Discussion Paper Series No.2. Available html http://hdn.org.ph/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/dp02_bautista_etal.pdf. Accessed on 23 September 2016.

102 Rappler. 2016. “Briones eyes Review of DepEd Spending.” 4 July. Available html <http://www.rappler.com/nation/138574-deped-leonor-briones-budget-efficiency>

103 Department of Education. 2014. “DepEd to investigate allegations of corruption from previous administration.” 3 June. Available html <http://www.deped.gov.ph/official-statements/deped-investigate-allegations-corruption-previous-administration>.

104 Espinas, Agnes. 2013. “Geography and Public Planning: Albay and Disaster Risk Management.” Human Development Network. HDN Discussion Paper Series 2012/2013 No. 4. Available html http://hdn.org.ph/wp-content/uploads/DP_04_Espinas.pdf

At the National Government Agency level, DepEd Order No. 55 series of 2007 was released to mainstream Disaster Risk Reduction Management in schools and implement projects to make schools safe.¹⁰⁵

DepEd also prepared and adopted the Safer Schools Resource Manual to guide education officials, school administrators, teachers and schoolchildren in the event of a disaster. The overarching goal is to create a disaster preparedness culture in the schools.¹⁰⁶

The Safe Schools Program covers the construction of “hazard resilient school buildings, mainstreaming DRR concepts in the elementary and secondary school curricula; school mapping exercise; schools water and electrical facilities assessment project; preparation of disaster preparedness modules through multimedia; quarterly conduct of earthquake and fire drills; and road safety education for children”¹⁰⁷.

In one research site, the school is located in a low-lying area that makes it prone to regular flooding after heavy downpour. This frequently disrupts classes as flood waters enter school grounds. The school has been identified as a high-risk area but cannot be moved to another location due to resource limitations.

In a recent super typhoon (Nina), most classrooms in Bato, Camarines Sur were severely damaged. The school served as an evacuation center for two weeks. Classrooms served as sleeping quarters at night, and classrooms at daytime. DepEd ensures schools buildings and equipment are protected when they are used as evacuation centers in times of disaster. They also ensure disruption to schooling is minimized post-disaster, and that classes resume as soon as possible to lend normalcy in the lives of the children. Normalcy is a challenge given the presence of evacuees, highlighting the calls from DepEd to identify alternative evacuation sites other than schools.

Damaged schools are also not rebuilt or repaired quickly enough. While the DepEd allocated budget to construct temporary learning spaces, this has been marked by costly bureaucratic delays. Classes are being held in damaged structures made more usable by installing tarpaulins to protect students from the elements. These temporary measures enable education to continue, but at the cost of a safer and more conducive learning environment.

105 Duroy, Chuzara. 2015. “Disaster Risk Reduction and Management: Bicol Experience.” Available html <http://hubpages.com/education/Disaster-Risk-Reduction-and-Management-Bicol-Experience>

106 Department of Education. 2008. Disaster Risk Reduction Manual. Available html <http://www.deped.gov.ph/sites/default/files/Disaster%20Risk%20Reduction%20Resource%20Manual.pdf>

107 Ibid.

In addition to rebuilding or repairing classrooms; destroyed learning and teaching materials should also be replaced to ensure the continuation of children's education. Damaged learning and instruction materials also become unusable according to students, further affecting textbook shortages. In such situations, speedy release of funds is crucial for normalcy to return immediately.

Based on the DRR Resource Manual from the DepEd, teachers said that all schools are required to come up with DRRM plans for their schools and conduct hazard mapping. However, an NGO reported that children have not participated in the planning for DRRM. A DRR Coordinator is appointed to take charge of developing this, with little to no stakeholder participation. In one municipality, the Municipal Government's DRRM provided training to school DRR coordinators on fire, typhoon, and earthquake response.

While it is important to provide for the physical needs of the children in the aftermath of disasters, equally important is the provision of psychosocial help, especially for those who experience trauma. Among those who participated in the validation, none has knowledge or experience in providing psychosocial support for disaster victims.

Rights to Education

The UNCRC emphasizes the government's obligation in achieving equal access to education as a right. This includes making education at different levels and stages compulsory or encouraged, as well as available for free to all children. Employing measures to promote regular attendance and reduce dropout rates are also tasked to the State.

Throughout the years, the government has exerted some effort to address the identified problems in the education sector. For instance, the administration of President Fidel Ramos¹⁰⁸ instituted landmark laws such as the provision of free basic education for children, which paved the way for the establishment of elementary schools in far-flung barangays and high schools in municipalities in the provinces.

In Bicol region, a child's right to education is yet to be fully upheld due to how education is being managed, but mostly due to poverty. These factors are discussed in detail as follows.

108 Ramos, Fidel Valdez. 1994. "Speech of President Ramos on Signing into Law of Various Bills on Education." Speech delivered at Malacanang Palace, Manila. 25 August 1994. Available html <http://www.gov.ph/1994/08/25/speech-of-president-ramos-on-signing-into-law-of-various-bills-on-education/> Accessed on 11 October 2016.

There is a Shortage of Classrooms

DepEd still faces the perennial problem of classroom shortages. During a budget hearing in 2015, it was estimated that the government previously had to build an estimated 80,000 classrooms before 2016 to meet the need.¹⁰⁹ Senator Recto, in that budget hearing, demurs that too much time was spent in “choosing, evaluating, and approving school sites,”¹¹⁰ which delays classroom construction.

Aside from administrative issues, new construction is hampered by Republic Act (RA) 7880 or the Fair and Equitable Allocation of the DECS (now known as DepEd) Budget for Capital Outlay.¹¹¹ This piece of legislation prioritizes schools with the highest student population for budget allocation, which puts schools needing classrooms but with lower student population at a disadvantage.¹¹² In such a scheme, rural municipal or barangay schools become the least priority for allocation further marginalizing poor students from smaller communities.

For Region V, the budget of the National Government for 2016 was only PhP14,000,000 for both elementary and high school. This is only enough to build a maximum number of 11 two-storey classrooms or 19 one-storey classrooms with toilet, furniture, and fixtures.¹¹³



109 Rappler. 2015. Recto wants itemized projects in DepEd's classroom budget. Available html <https://www.rappler.com/nation/106107-department-education-classroom-construction-fund-itemize>

110 *ibid.*

111 Maligalig, Dalisay S, Rhona B. Caoili-Rodriguez, Arturo Martinez, Jr., and Sining Cuevas. 2010. "Education Outcomes in the Philippines." ADB Economics Working Paper Series.No. 1999.

112 *Ibid.*

113 Alcober, Noel. 2012. "DepEd details PhP1.1M cost of each classroom." Public-Private Partnership Center. Available html http://ppp.gov.ph/?in_the_news=deped-details-p1-1m-cost-of-each-classroom

While the SEF could be used to augment the meager budget, tax collections in third to fifth class municipalities or cities are often not enough for new construction. SEF collections and balances in different LSBs were also reported to lack transparency,¹¹⁴ resulting to SEF being underspent. There are also indications, as stated in previous sections, of the education budget being corrupted.

Senator Franklin Drilon noted that DepEd spent twice the amount per square meter (PhP10,000/sqm) than what the Senator had spent for the construction of a similar classroom (PhP5,000/sqm), which according to him means, private contractors are making a 100 percent profit margin with the construction of the classrooms.¹¹⁵

In June 2015, some PhP49 billion school building funds remained unused.¹¹⁶ There were also delays in budget utilization of budget from previous years. Once the budget is turned over to schools for construction, it will also take roughly seven months from building, completion, to the turnover of the new room.¹¹⁷ Funds are also not released on time. For years, funds are only released in June when classes are about to start. New identified needs based on fresh enrollment data or information will not be addressed until the construction is finished from the previous budget, further compounding the backlog.

In Bicol, administrators are forced to employ various strategies to address the problem. These include multi-grade classrooms, partitioning bigger classrooms into two, and the converting of canteens or office spaces into classrooms. For example, one principal's office had been converted into a classroom while the former held office in a stock room and the library was converted into a room for kindergarten students. One room can have multiple purposes and serve as a guidance office, SPED room, and classroom based on immediate need or schedule. Constructing temporary learning spaces (TLS) is another measure. One child, who goes to a large high school, shared that some classes are held on school grounds, on a stage, or any vacant room.

Some schools, however, have been successful in constructing new buildings/classrooms through the leadership and initiative of their principals. Through a Department Order, DepEd has authorized school principals to solicit and manage donations from the private

114 Manasan, Rosario, Alicia Celestino, and Janet Cuenca. 2011. "Mobilizing LGU Support for Basic Education: Focus on the Special Education Fund." Philippine Institute of Development Studies. Discussion Paper Series 2011-07. May. Available html <http://dirp4.pids.gov.ph/ris/dps/pidsdps1107.pdf>.

115 Yamsuan, Cathy. 2011. "Drilon questions P650,000 cost to construct one classroom." Philippine Daily Inquirer. 20 September. Available html <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/61635/drilon-questions-p650000-cost-to-construct-just-one-classroom>

116 Diaz, Jess. 2015. "P49B for School Buildings Unused." Philippine Star. 9 June. Available html <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2015/06/09/1463854/p49-b-school-buildings-unused>

117 PCIJ Blog. 2006. "Is there or isn't there classroom shortage?" 1 June. Available html <http://pcij.org/blog/2006/06/01/is-there-or-isnt-there-a-classroom-shortage>.

sector. In a school visited by the research team, the elementary school principal successfully built a two-storey Standard Department of Education room and several Marcos-type classrooms. The principal reached out to corporations, civil society organizations, and donor organizations that provide Official Development Assistance.

High Schools are in Locations not Accessible to all

Over the years, the government built elementary schools in most barangays, contributing to higher participation rates in elementary school. However, this same strategy has not been employed for high schools. High schools are usually found in city or municipal centers, which could be quite a distance from rural barangays.

In many provinces, including in Bicol, high schools are usually built in town and municipal centers, which require children from far-flung barangays to either walk on foot or commute. This marginalizes the rural poor even more as they cannot afford extra expenses to travel daily to school.

Children from rural areas cited distance of high schools from their residence as one of the reasons for dropping out. In a 2009 study by Fe Nava, one-third of children “dropped out because they lived far from school, or did not have transportation money; for this reason, about one-third of male elementary school dropouts also mentioned tiredness from walking to school as a reason for leaving.”¹¹⁸

‘Baon’ and Other Fees Add to the Cost of Education

While primary and secondary education in the Philippines is free, there are still indirect or personal costs such as transportation, school supplies, food, uniform costs, and other fees that come with schooling.¹¹⁹ Table 9 compares the difference in cost between a elementary and secondary school.

A Fact Sheet released by the DepEd in 2013 provides a conservative estimate of miscellaneous school costs per year to send children to elementary or secondary school in highly urbanized areas.¹²⁰ Costs will vary depending on where the student lives. The figures

118 Nava, Fe Josefa G. 2009. “Factors in School Leaving: Variations Across Gender Groups, School Levels and Locations.” Available html ovcrd.upd.edu.ph/edq/article/view/2019/1914

119 Maligalig, Dalisay S, Rhona B. Caoili-Rodriguez, Arturo Martinez, Jr., and Sining Cuevas. 2010. “Education Outcomes in the Philippines.” ADB Economics Working Paper Series.No. 1999.

120 Reyes, Therese. 2015. “The real cost of education in the Philippines.” Rappler.Avaliable html <http://www.rappler.com/brandrap/advocacies/105019-real-cost-education-ph>. Accessed on 12 October 2016.

also do not include an estimate of the daily allowance or “*baon*” of the children for food and other needs.

Table 9. Estimated Expenses of an Elementary and Secondary Filipino Public School Student (Annual)

Expense	Elementary (in PhP)	Secondary (in PhP)
Tuition Fee	0	0
Parent Teacher Association (PTA)	200	300
Other Fees	150	200
Books	0	0
School Supplies	900	800
Other Instructional Materials	200	260
Uniform	500	600
Transport	2,400	2,400
Total	PHP 4,350 (USD 85)	PHP 4,560 (USD 90)

(Conversion: USD 1 = PHP 50)

Large families from poor households find it difficult to shoulder these fees. Actual costs may be higher as transportation costs rise directly proportional to distance of homes of students from the school or with required school projects that entail expenses. This has pushed a sizable number of children to forego high school with parental consent, given its distance from rural barangays and other expenses.

In cases of family emergencies, illnesses, or loss of employment, children from very poor households are made to stop attending school as a way of dealing with the socioeconomic issues faced by the family. Some families require their children to work to help augment the family income.

DepEd has partially addressed the issue with its “no school contributions collection” policy, which prohibits any kind of contribution for the child to be allowed to enroll.¹²¹ The government enacted a food assistance program to avert drop-out rates, especially

121 Reyes, Therese. 2015. “The real cost of education in the Philippines.” Rappler. Available html <http://www.rappler.com/brandrap/advocacies/105019-real-cost-education-ph>. Accessed on 12 October 2016.

among the most vulnerable. Rice subsidies and milk provision program catered to first grade students for 120 days.

These programs however did not succeed in improving school attendance among the vulnerable groups. It was found that the more effective program was to provide subsidies to augment the income of families for their household expenditures as found in the experiences of Latin American and other developing countries.¹²² This gave birth to the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) of the government, which gave small subsidies to very poor families who sent their children to school.¹²³

But even then, the problem still persisted as the poor people reached by the 4Ps program were not able to cross out of the subsistence poverty levels. The conditional cash transfer was not enough to augment their income to be considered not subsistence poor. There were also problems on the supply side, such that there were not enough schools, classrooms or teachers and health facilities to actually make a difference in the lives of the poor.¹²⁴

For high school students, the most common reason for dropping out was not having pocket money for lunch, taking care of siblings for female students, and having no money for transportation or for school projects.

The 2013 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) survey, showed that out-of-school children and youth report lack of personal interest (19.1 percent) as their principal reason for being out-of-school, behind marriage (22.9 percent) and insufficient family income (19.2 percent).¹²⁵

Lack of interest is a catch-all phrase for lack of financial resources of the household as supported by results of field interviews of the Annual Poverty Indicator Survey (APIS). This could also mean “lack of parental support, the need to contribute to family income, and even supply side issues such as low quality of schools available and the distance of schools.”¹²⁶

122 Maligalig, Dalisay S, Rhona B. Caoili-Rodriguez, Arturo Martinez, Jr., and Sining Cuevas. 2010. “Education Outcomes in the Philippines.” ADB Economics Working Paper Series.No. 1999.

123 Maligalig, Dalisay S, Rhona B. Caoili-Rodriguez, Arturo Martinez, Jr., and Sining Cuevas. 2010. “Education Outcomes in the Philippines.” ADB Economics Working Paper Series. No. 1999., page 35

124 Reyes, Celia and Aubrey Tabuga. 2012. “Conditional Cash Transfer in the Philippines: Is it Reaching the Extremely Poor?” Philippine Institute of Development Studies. Discussion Paper Series 2012-42. Available html <http://dirp4.pids.gov.ph/ris/dps/pidsdps1242.pdf>

125 Philippine Statistics Authority. 2013. “2013 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey Final Report.” Available html <https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/2013%20FLEMMS%20Final%20Report.pdf>

126 Albert, Jose Ramon, Francis Mark Quimba, Andre Philippe Ramos and Jocelyn Almeda. 2012. “Profile of Out-of-School Children in the Philippines.” Philippine Institute for Development Studies. Discussion Paper Series No. 2012-01. January 2012. Available html

Another 19.2 percent, on the other hand, cited insufficient family income as the reason for not attending school (this refers to all educational expenses other than tuition fee).¹²⁷

While school projects are an important aspect of learning, teachers should ensure learning activities will not entail expenses for students from poor households. Some children commented on projects as expensive but not relevant to learning.

Children are Unprepared for Formal Schooling

Filipino parents usually refrain from enrolling young children in school due to the misconception that children aged six and below are too young for formal schooling, such as primary, kindergarten, or day care education systems. Thus, some would enroll their kids when they are a bit older, contrary to how the K-12 system is organized. This could contribute to drop-out rates because late entry means they are older than their classmates.¹²⁸ Parents were also concerned that children would experience difficulties in socializing with other children, and therefore delay enrolling them in the educational system.

Children may also drop out of school because they have no fine motor skills necessary to write, nor could they identify letters and numbers. Some teachers who joined the Validation Workshop agreed that some children eventually drop out because they cannot cope with the academic demands of school. Either the children end up embarrassed for being behind everyone else, or they get frustrated with the demands of schooling.

These children, who lack school readiness and without early childhood care and development (ECCD) education are most likely to drop out within the first month to first three years of formal schooling.

Child Labor Exists in Bicol

Poor Filipino families send their children to work and their choice is often based on their immediate economic needs. Some children may work out of familial obligation or as a gesture of gratitude.

127 Philippine Statistics Authority. 2015. "Out-of-School Children and Youth in the Philippines (Results from the 2013 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey)." Available html <http://web0.psa.gov.ph/content/out-school-children-and-youth-philippines-results-2013-functional-literacy-education-and>

128 Albert, Jose Ramon G., Francis Mark A. Quimba, Andre Philippe E. Ramos, and Jocelyn P. Almeda. 2012. Profile of Out of School Youth Children in the Philippines." PIDS. Discussion Paper Series No. 2012-01. Available html <http://dirp3.pids.gov.ph/ris/dps/pidsdps1201.pdf>

Once at work and some degree of financial independence has been attained, children are less enticed to go back to school unless the opportunity cost is offset through compensation that offers acceptable levels of returns for the “earnings to be foregone by attending school.”¹²⁹

In Bicol, it is common for children to work in agriculture or fishing industries. For instance, teachers share that during the planting and harvest seasons, children of farmers are usually taken out of school to help with farm work causing them to miss school. The same goes for fisherfolk families who regularly enjoin children in their livelihood. Children spend the whole night awake at sea and are too tired to go to class in the daytime. When they fall behind in class, students decide to quit school. This is particularly relevant to boys since they are perceived to be more physically able than girls.

Female teenagers, on the other hand, are recruited as store clerks or are trafficked as domestic workers. Bicol has been identified by the Visayan Forum, an NGO championing the rights of domestic workers, as a top source of child domestic workers, who trafficked within Bicol or major city centers such as Metro Manila.¹³⁰

There is child labor in the region. ILO defines child labor as “work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.”¹³¹ The region has been tagged as having one of the highest incidences of child labor in the country at 8.6 percent of the region’s non-adult population.¹³² In Camarines Norte, children as young as 9 years old are already working in gold mines, often working in very hazardous working conditions. These children are too tired to study and work at the same time.¹³³

Gender and Sex Factors Affect Access in Education

In the Philippines, there is higher enrollment and completion of elementary and high school education among females, which runs counter to statistics in other parts of the world where more males have access to education than females.

129 Maligalig, Dalisay S, Rhona B. Caoili-Rodriguez, Arturo Martinez, Jr., and Sining Cuevas. 2010. “Education Outcomes in the Philippines.” ADB Economics Working Paper Series.No. 1999.

130 Rappler. 2012. “Fast Facts on Filipino Domestic Workers.” 8 June. Available html <http://www.rappler.com/nation/6378-fast-facts-on-filipino-domestic-workers>.

131 International Labour Organisation. No Date. “What is Child Labor?” Available html <http://ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>.

132 Abella, Jerry. 2010. DOJ, DOLE in Bicol Team up vs. Child Labor and Trafficking. 13 November. Available html <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/205870/doj-dole-in-bicol-team-up-vs-child-labor-trafficking/story>

133 Human Rights Watch. 2015. What..if Something Went Wrong? Hazardous Child Labor in Small Scale Gold Mining in the Philippines. Avail-able html <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/09/29/what-if-something-went-wrong/hazardous-child-labor-small-scale-gold-mining>

In Region 5, there is slightly higher enrollment rates among females compared to males in both elementary and high school. For instance, in 2015, DepEd Region 5 reported that enrollment among females is 91.45 percent and 90.75 percent among males. Of these, 90.86 percent of females will graduate from elementary while only 84.46 percent of males will.

Enrollment numbers drastically reduce when children enter high school. In Bicol, 76 percent of females and 64.45 percent of males proceed to high school. Only 82.77 percent of females will graduate and 68.85 percent of males.

Boys drop out because:

- “Overall, boys score lower than girls in National Achievement Tests (NATs), but this does not mean that boys are mentally inferior, they are simply less academically prepared for various reasons, including their inattentiveness in class;”
- “Boys tend to do poorly than girls, as they become frustrated, they tend to drop out;”
- “Girls value education more than boys do because they no longer see themselves merely staying at home when they grow up, they expect to have careers, boys tend to assume they would be able to work even without finishing school;”
- “Poor families tend to make the boys work because they are considered to be more physically able than girls. Since boys generally perform poorer in school, it seems easier for parents to make them quit and get a job;”
- “Boys tend to be diverted from school by all sorts of distractions, like billiards, basketball and computer gaming.”¹³⁴

For high school girls who drop out, one of the reasons is early pregnancy. This is attributed to data citing, “1 out of 3 Filipino youth engage in premarital sex.”¹³⁵ In fact, marriage or unions is the number one reason why Filipino children and youth drop out of school.¹³⁶ The 2014 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS) study found out that “around 14

134 Chua, Yvonne. 2005. “When classes open today, many boys won’t be in school.” PCIJ. Available html <http://pcij.org/stories/when-classes-open-to-day-many-boys-wont-be-in-school/>

135 Geronimo, Jee. 2014. “When talking about sex is easy.” Rappler.30 July. Available html <http://www.rappler.com/nation/64805-teenage-sexuality-re-productive-health-u4u>

136 Philippine Statistics Office. 2013. Philippine Statistics Authority. 2013. “2013 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey Final Report.” Available html <https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/2013%20FLEMMMS%20Final%20Report.pdf>

percent of Filipino girls aged 15 to 19 are either pregnant for the first time or are already mothers—more than twice the rate recorded in 2002.”¹³⁷

This is a reflection of young Filipinos’ “limited access to sex education and Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health services, especially if they are underage and unmarried” as explained by Josefina Natividad, lead researcher of the YAFS Study. Unfortunately, “incidents of teenage pregnancy are higher in poorer sections of society because, as demographic data suggest, these people have less access to correct, relevant, and age-appropriate information.”¹³⁸

Recently, there were moves from the Department of Health (DOH) to distribute condoms in high schools to quell the rising incidences of teenage pregnancy and cases of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and as recognition of data that Filipino teenagers are increasingly having premarital sex. However, this was met with refusal by the DepEd, underscoring its duty to improve the curriculum so that children would understand the “consequence of premarital sex, the dangers involved, but not the distribution (of condoms).”¹³⁹

While there have been many attempts to include sex education in the curriculum, this has been met by denunciation from the Catholic Church. Conversations with teachers who handle sex education classes revealed that they also refuse to teach sex education in class because they think students are not mature enough, with children often giggling or becoming uncomfortable. Moreover, some teachers also have the mistaken notion that introducing the subject to children would make them more curious to try it out with peers.

Children with Disabilities Cannot Access Education

According to Edgardo F. Garcia who works with the organization Deaf Blind Support Philippines, disability “refers to any restriction or lack of ability (resulting from impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.”¹⁴⁰

Disabilities come in various forms: blindness and visual impairment, deafness, learning disabilities, autism, serious emotional disorders, while sometimes, some may have multiple

137 Van Der Hor, Carin. 2014. “Teenage pregnancy among today’s Filipino youth.” Philippine Daily Inquirer. 15 May. Available html <http://opinion.inquirer.net/74517/teenage-pregnancy-among-todays-filipino-youth>

138 Geronimo, Jee. 2014. “When talking about sex is easy.” Rappler. 30 July. Available html <http://www.rappler.com/nation/64805-teenage-sexuality-reproductive-health-u4u>

139 Rappler. 2017. Briones: No Condom Distribution in Schools. 31 January. Available html <http://www.rappler.com/nation/160040-briones-no-condom-distribution-schools>

140 Garcia, Edgardo F. 2014. Persons with Disabilities: Status in the Philippines. PowerPoint presentation delivered during the 1st International Conference of Public Librarians. 19-21 March. Available html <http://web.nlp.gov.ph/nlp/sites/default/files/20Mar2014/Persons%20with%20Disabilities%20by%20Edgardo%20garcia.pdf>

disabilities. In the Philippines, the most common form of disabilities are multiple, orthopedic, and mental disabilities.¹⁴¹

In Bicol, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reports that 1.85 percent of the population have disabilities,¹⁴² higher than the national figures of 1.57 percent. It also notes that the incidence of disability was highest among persons aged five to 19 years old.

By law, Persons with Disabilities (PWD) are entitled to educational assistance to pursue primary, secondary, and tertiary education in the Philippines.¹⁴³ However, despite the existence of the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities and RA 10754 and the Department of Education's Zero Rejection Policy for disabled children, some 97 percent of disabled children are still not reached by the public education system.¹⁴⁴

In a study conducted by the NGO Simon of Cyrene in Albay, among PWD aged 13 to 17 years old, 21.7 percent of males and 25 percent of females had a highest educational grade achieved of elementary school.¹⁴⁵ However, the same study cites that in "children with disabilities aged 4 to 17 years old 32.6 percent of males and 31.8 percent of females had never been to school" and "32.4 percent of PWD aged four and 17 years had never attended school" at all.

The same study also states that PWDs have "significant unmet demand for support services" and have "no knowledge of support services which are available." Moreover, PWDs are not only "disadvantaged in access to education and employment," but they are deprived of education on their basic rights, a prerequisite for full inclusion in society".¹⁴⁶ There is also lack of adequate facilities and appropriately trained teachers to accommodate students with disabilities in Albay province. These findings may exemplify the situation in other parts of the region.

141 Garcia, Edgardo F. 2014. Persons with Disabilities: Status in the Philippines. PowerPoint presentation delivered during the 1st International Conference of Public Librarians. 19-21 March. Available html <http://web.nlp.gov.ph/nlp/sites/default/files/20Mar2014/Persons%20with%20Disabilities%20by%20Edgardo%20garcia.pdf>

142 Philippine Statistics Authority. 2013. Persons with Disability in the Philippines. Available html <https://psa.gov.ph/content/persons-disability-philippines-results-2010-census>.

143 Republic Act 10754. 2015. An Act Expanding the Benefits and Privileges of Persons with Disability (PWD).

144 Garcia, Edgardo F. 2014. Persons with Disabilities: Status in the Philippines. PowerPoint presentation delivered during the 1st International Conference of Public Librarians. 19-21 March. Available html <http://web.nlp.gov.ph/nlp/sites/default/files/20Mar2014/Persons%20with%20Disabilities%20by%20Edgardo%20garcia.pdf>

145 Simon of Cyrene. 2016. Cross Sectional Survey to Assess the Burden of Physical and Mental Disabilities in Albay Province, Philippines.

146 Ibid.

Rights in Education (Quality)

Enshrined in the UNCRC is the principle that all children should have equal opportunity to quality education regardless of their socioeconomic class. According to UNICEF, education should have a “broad, relevant and inclusive curriculum,” it should have “rights-based learning and assessment,” and “child-friendly, safe and healthy environments”.¹⁴⁷

The curriculum must enable every child to “acquire the core academic curriculum and basic cognitive skills, together with essential life skills to face challenges, make well-balanced decisions and develop a healthy lifestyle, good social relationships, critical thinking and the capacity for non-violent conflict resolution”.¹⁴⁸

Unfortunately, there are clear disparities in the quality of education offered by public and private schools in the country. Faced with resource, facility and personnel problems, many Philippine public schools lag behind private schools in terms of the quality of education they offer. The quality of education has also been a cause for concern based on student and teacher performance.

Bicol was surveyed as among the regions with the lowest functional literacy. In addition, the National Achievement Test (NAT) scores of students in the Region were below the national average in 2006.

Low Functional Literacy Scores

One of the possible indicators of the state of education in the Bicol region is the functional literacy rates of its population. Functional literacy is defined by the UNICEF as “the ability to use reading, writing and numeracy skills for effective functioning and development of the individual and the community.”¹⁴⁹

Functional literacy requires higher order set of thinking skills that is developed through education. Based on the Functional Literacy Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) in 2008, only 79.9 percent of the Bicol population can be described as

147 UNICEF. 2014. Child Rights Education Tool Kit: Rooting Child Rights in Early Childhood Education, Primary and Secondary Schools, First Edition. Geneva: UNICEF Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division. Available html http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/UNICEF_CRE_Toolkit_FINAL_web_version170414.pdf. Accessed on 22 September 2016.

148 Ibid.

149 UNESCO. 2006. Education for All Global Monitoring Report. Available html http://www.unesco.org/education/GMR2006/full/chapt6_eng.pdf. Accessed on 15 October 2016.

functionally literate (see Table 10).¹⁵⁰ It is fifth among the different regions with the lowest Functional Literacy Rates.

Table 10. Functional Literacy Rate, 10-64 years old by Socioeconomic Status and Region: 2008

Region	Population	Socioeconomic Status	
		Poor	Non Poor
NCR	94	85.7	95
CAR	89.2	75	95.3
1	91.3	84.1	92.9
2	86.1	76.4	90.2
3	92.1	83.6	93.3
4-A	94.5	86.1	95.2
4-B	83.9	69.6	90.6
5	79.9	69.7	86.1
6	82.6	69.9	88.9
7	86.6	75.5	90.7
8	72.9	58.3	81.4
9	79.6	68	88
10	85.9	73.8	92.2
11	81.7	65	89
12	78.3	60	87.6
CARAGA	85.7	73.2	90.8
ARMM	71.6	68.4	74.6

Poor communities from all regions have lower functional literacy than the non-poor population, suggesting gaps in access to quality education. The same is true for Bicol. The

150 TESDA. 2008. Highlights of the 2008 Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey. Taguig City: TESDA.

functional literacy rate is also way below the functional literacy rate of the NCR and the national functional literacy rate of 86.4.

Unsatisfactory NAT Scores

The NAT is a set of standardized tests given by the DepEd to Grade 3, Grade 6, and fourth year high school students to gauge their learning outcomes in key subject areas. Unsatisfactory academic performance of public school students in the National Achievement Test (NAT) is a symptom of the ailing quality of education in the country. It is currently the only standardized assessment of student performance at the national level.

From 2007 to 2012, students from public schools have consistently fared poorly in the NAT¹⁵¹ with the mean scores far from the DepEd targeted 75 percent¹⁵² competency level of students.

Third-grade students who took the NAT from school year 2009-2010 to 2011-2012 fared poorly across all subjects, with the average mean percentage score (MPS) of students going just a little over 50 percent.

The “MPS indicates the percentage of correctly answered items in a test,” which means that a 50 MPS in a subject area means an examinee correctly answered half of the test items.¹⁵³ Close to half of the students only got a mean percentage score of up to 65 percent or six out of 10 correct answers. Only 1.78 percent of examinees mastered (a score of 75-100) their courses in SY 2009- 2010 while 60 percent mastered their courses in SY 2011-2012.

DepEd adjusted the scoring to include low scores in the category of students with near mastery (a score of 50-74), such that a student who gets an MPS of 35 percent (3.5 out of 10 questions) is considered as having average mastery.

Sixth-grade students fared slightly better than third-grade students. For instance, over six out of 10 students garnered an MPS of 66 or better. This means that almost seven out 10 students got more than six correct answers in a 10 item test. However, the numbers are still dismal since approximately 40 percent of the students scored below 60 percent.

151 Department of Education. 2016. NAT Performance. Available html <http://www.netrc.sysportal.net/Frame.aspx?id=2009>. Accessed on 5 September 2016.

152 Benito, Nelia. 2014. 2014 NAT Overview PowerPoint Presentation. Department of Education NETRC. Available html www.depednegor.net/uploads/8/3/5/2/.../2014_nat_presentation-dr_benito.ppt.

153 Benito, Nelia. 2014. 2014 NAT Overview PowerPoint Presentation. Department of Education NETRC. Available html www.depednegor.net/uploads/8/3/5/2/.../2014_nat_presentation-dr_benito.ppt.

Fourth-year students were the poorest performers, contrary to the expected degree of mastery of their subjects. Among public and private school fourth year high school NAT takers, none have achieved mastery of the subjects. There is also very low percentage of students who are closely approximating mastery (.04 percent; those who scored 91 and above) and moving towards mastery (11.4 percent; those who scored 75- 90). Most students garnered average or near mastery scores (74 percent, or those who scored 50-74) and low scores (14.45 percent or those who scored below 50). The mean score for SY2011-2012 is low at 48.57 percent.

The scores of students in the Bicol region collated in 2006¹⁵⁴ illustrate the poor national performance in the NAT. Of 17 regions, Grade 6 students from Bicol had a mean score of 50.4 percent in the National Achievement Tests, below the target of 75 percent as seen in Table 11. On the other hand, secondary school seniors fared poorly as the region had a mean score of 40.9 percent. These are indicative that issues raised in the area affect student performance. The scores of the students in the region are below the national average.

Table 11. NAT Scores of Grade 6 and Senior HS Students in the Philippines and Bicol ¹⁵⁵

Region	Grade 6	Fourth Year HS
Philippines	54.5	44.3
V- Bicol	50.4	40.9

The problem is compounded by scarcity of able teachers and reliable textbooks, the unfavorable teaching and learning environment as well as the lack of resource materials, among other gaps.

A district supervisor who took part in the validation workshop offered his view on student’s low scores in the region. According to him, given the shortages in textbooks, most students are trained in class to be listeners rather than readers. This becomes an impediment since tests require reading and comprehension skills, which many students fail to develop on account of shortages in learning materials. While this is a logical explanation, it would be good to verify this with research.

154 Philippine Statistics Authority. 2007. "Students scores in achievement tests deteriorating; CARAGA and Eastern Visayas Rank Highest." 8 May. Available html <http://nap.psa.gov.ph/factsheet/pdf07/FS-200705-SS2-01.asp>.

155 TESDA. 2009. Labor Market Intelligence Report. Available html [http://www.tesda.gov.ph/uploads/File/LMIR2011/ST-PO%2006-03-2011%20%20\(FLEMMS\).pdf](http://www.tesda.gov.ph/uploads/File/LMIR2011/ST-PO%2006-03-2011%20%20(FLEMMS).pdf)

Teachers also share that many students have impaired cognitive skills, which may have resulted from malnutrition or undernutrition experienced early in life. This is compounded by the non-mastery of the English and Filipino languages that are used as the languages for exams.

Another problem faced by the region is the provision of early childhood care. Only a total of 356 barangays or 10 percent of the total number of barangays in Bicol have daycare centers. Expectedly, only 64 percent of pupils in Grade 1 had early childhood care in 2009.¹⁵⁶ This is an unfortunate development because research has repeatedly shown that students who undergo early childhood education usually perform better academically than those who did not.

Teachers handling the day care centers have been found to have poor skills or competency as the DSWD only provides a Manual for Day Care Teachers instead of actual training to teachers. There is also disregard for the necessary qualifications of teachers as the appointment of the teacher is usually political in nature. The conditions of the DCC and the kindergarten are also unsatisfactory. The setup is not deemed child-friendly, and the learning materials are also inadequate.

Teachers Lack in Number, in Training, and in Incentives

Lack of Teachers, and Limited Training and Other Professional Incentives

DepEd reports that¹⁵⁷ teacher-to-student ratio was brought down to 1:36 for elementary public schools and 1:27 in secondary schools in 2015 compared to 1:70 two decades ago.

Of the total allocated budget in 2016, 62 percent went to personnel services, earmarked to hire an additional 79,691 teaching and non-teaching personnel.¹⁵⁸ This has contributed to the reduction of teacher shortages in many areas.

However, disparities in student-to-teacher ratio still exist especially in highly populated areas and in rural barangay elementary schools. Some teaching items/positions are in reality assigned to administrative and other responsibilities, not teaching.¹⁵⁹ Thus, reports of

156 Republic of the Philippines. 2011. Bicol Regional Development Plan, 2011-2016. Manila: Republic of the Philippines. Available html http://www.neda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/RegV_RDP_2011-2016.pdf. Accessed on 15 October 2016.

157 Department of Education (DepEd). 2015. "I will give my life for children" --Luistro." Available html <http://www.deped.gov.ph/press-releases/>"i-will-give-my-life-children"---luistro. Accessed on 5 September 2016.

158 Office of the President. 2016. "Education Tops 2016 Budget." Official Gazette. Available html <http://www.gov.ph/2015/09/08/education-tops-2016-budget/>. Accessed on 5 September 2016.

159 Maligalig, Dalisay S, Rhona B. Caoili-Rodriguez, Arturo Martinez, Jr., and Sining Cuevas. 2010. "Education Outcomes in the Philippines." ADB Economics Working Paper Series.No. 1999.

the national government on the student-teacher ratio do not necessarily reflect what can be observed on the ground. In fact, current DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones admitted that teacher shortages are still a problem.¹⁶⁰

There were marked improvements in student-teacher ratio from 2012 to 2015. This has reduced class sizes to more manageable proportions compared to class sizes in the 1990s and the early 21st century when class sizes went up to as high as 80 students per class. In the Bicol region, the average student-to-teacher ratio looks very good on paper as can be seen in Table 11.

Among the provinces in Bicol with available data, Sorsogon and Masbate have the best student-teacher ratio for Elementary at 1:25. From a high of 1:46 in Camarines Sur in 2012, the figures went down drastically to 1:28. The regional teacher-student ratio also went down from a high of 1:41 in 2012 to 1:27 in 2015.

Table 12. Teacher-Pupil Ratio, Elementary, Select School Divisions in Bicol Region, 2012-2015

Division	Pupil-Teacher Ratio			
	2012	2013	2014	2015
Camarines Sur	1:46	1:45	1:38	1:28
Albay	1:38	1:39	1:35	1:27
Sorsogon	1:38	1:37	1:33	1:25
Masbate	1:42	1:40	1:35	1:25
Region V	1:41	1:40	1:36	1:27

High school teacher-student ratio has also generally improved as Table 13 shows. For instance from a high of 1:34 in the region, the numbers went down to 1:26. Masbate had the most marked improvement from 1:41 in 2012, it went down by 14 percentage points three years later. Sorsogon also has the best teacher-student ratio in high school at 1:25.

¹⁶⁰ Elemia, Camille. 2016. "DepEd lacks 15,000 teachers – Briones" Rappler. 26 September. Available html <https://www.rappler.com/nation/147365-deped-lacks-15000-teachers-2017-budget-briones>

Table 13. Teacher-Student Ratio, High School, Select School Divisions in the Bicol Region, 2012-2015

Division	Pupil-Teacher Ratio			
	2012	2013	2014	2015
Camarines Sur	1:34	1:34	1:27	1:26
Albay	1:31	1:30	1:27	1:26
Sorsogon	1:34	1:34	1:26	1:25
Masbate	1:41	1:39	1:27	1:27
Region V	1:34	1:34	1:27	1:26

Substantial increases in budget for education have improved teacher-student ratio all over the country including Region V in the government’s race to meet its MDGs. The improved wages for teachers may have also contributed to this as more teacher applicants are attracted by better pay packages.

However, it must be pointed out that these are average rates. There are considerable differences in the ratio depending on the area of the school, the student population, and other variables. In small rural municipalities, teacher shortage is still stark. Schools employ unconventional strategies to address the shortage such as combined classrooms where two grade levels are taught in one class or multi-grade classes that have more than two grade levels in each class.

Such a system is usually employed in secondary school where student enrollment is lower. However, there are teachers in Bicol who report multi-grade classes in elementary school as well. First two grade levels are combined because of teacher shortages in some areas.

Teachers who handle combined or multi-grade classes complain of the difficulty of handling these classes because special strategies need to be employed to ensure optimal learning. They struggle between giving lectures to one grade level and facilitating the other level in seatwork or class activities simultaneously. Teachers also complain of difficulties in managing classes with diverse learners, particularly learners with behavior problems. Handling such classes necessitate special training, which not all teachers have.

Another indication of teacher shortage is the absence of teacher substitutes in the case of teacher absences. In a school visited by the research team, the class had been asked to stay at home for several days because the teacher gave birth. In other instances, classes are given seatwork by a teacher from another class who simultaneously has to handle his/her own class. Thus, student learning bears the brunt of disruptions caused by teacher absences and lack of substitute teachers.

Teachers share that teaching items are still available. But due to DepEd's more stringent procedures, hiring has been more prohibitive; thus, many areas do not have teachers. The drive for quality teachers has compounded teacher hiring, which may be a reflection of the quality of graduates of education schools. If many are unemployed because of failure to reach the proper qualifications, it means that the best students are not attracted to the teaching course. According to Nagao et al,¹⁶¹ the quality of students enrolling in teaching courses is poor in developing countries, as it is perceived as a less demanding and low-paying profession. Resources are limited to provide adequate training for all teachers.

Criticisms on Quality of Teachers

Learning outcomes are highly contingent on the teaching skills of teachers.¹⁶²

According to various studies, students fared better in assessment tests given the following conditions: their teachers shifted to the vernacular in explaining concepts; teachers teach subjects they specialize in; teachers attend in-service training; teachers consult with parents; students are made to use problem solving and investigative projects in science, constructing shapes in math, graphic organizing and journal writings; school administrators monitor; and the community provides sufficient financial and material support.¹⁶³

A survey conducted by the DepEd in 2008 shows that 80 percent of public secondary school teachers failed the IELTS English proficiency exam.¹⁶⁴ There are also constraints in expertise and competence among teachers in other subjects such as Math and the Sciences.¹⁶⁵

161 Nagao, Masafumi, John M. Rogan, and Marcelita Coronel Magno. 2007. *Mathematics and Science Education in Developing Countries: Issues, Experiences, and Cooperation Prospects*. University of Hawaii.

162 Bautista, Ma. Cynthia Rose, Allan Bernardo, and Dina Ocampo. 2009. "When Reforms Don't Transform Reflections on Institutional Re-forms in the Department of Education." Human Development Network Discussion Paper Series No. 2. Available html http://hdn.org.ph/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/dp02_bautista_etal.pdf. Accessed on 23 September 2016.

163 Bautista, Ma. Cynthia Rose, Allan Bernardo, and Dina Ocampo. 2009. "When Reforms Don't Transform Reflections on Institutional Re-forms in the Department of Education." Human Development Network Discussion Paper Series No. 2. Available html http://hdn.org.ph/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/dp02_bautista_etal.pdf. Accessed on 23 September 2016.

164 Wilson, Karl. 2009. "Teachers blamed as English standards fall in Philippines." *The National World*. 10 November 2009. Available html <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/asia-pacific/teachers-blamed-as-english-standards-fall-in-philippines>. Accessed on 23 September 2016.

165 Nagao, Masafumi, John M. Rogan, and Marcelita Coronel Magno. 2007. *Mathematics and Science Education in Developing Countries: Issues, Experiences, and Cooperation Prospects*. University of Hawaii.

The DepEd has recently installed rigorous vetting standards in hiring teachers. Through DepEd Order No. 7 and 22, Series of 2015, teacher applicants are vetted according to their education, teaching experience, LET/PBET rating, specialized training and skills, interview, demonstration teaching, and communication skills. However, it does not hold a probation period to test if new teachers are fit for the job. Theoretically, accepted applicants can remain in the position even if no longer fit for the job or they already have outdated skills and knowledge. This is in stark contrast with teacher controls in other Asian countries, which require entrance examinations, probationary period, and regular teacher evaluation to ensure quality as shown in Table 14.

Table 14. Overview of Teacher Management Policies Across Select Asian Countries¹⁶⁶

	Teacher Standards			In-Service Training	Teacher Salary and other Benefits	
	Entrance Exam	Probationary Period	Licensure Renewal/Sustaining	In-service Training	Pay/Salary Increase	Evaluation and Rewards
Philippines	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	-*
Japan	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Indonesia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Thailand	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
Malaysia	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Singapore	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

* Data not available

The lack of regular evaluation of teachers may promote antiquated styles of pedagogy. In the FGD with children, some shared stories that illustrate the lack of effective pedagogical skills, professionalism and work ethic.

Several children complained of poor correspondence between learning objectives (what they discussed in class) and the exams conducted for evaluation (the exams cover other topics). Their concern betrays ineffective teaching strategy given the failure to test learning outcomes. Some teachers also make the classroom an unsafe learning environment when they reportedly laugh at students who make mistakes.

166 UNESCO. 2014. Education Systems in ASEAN + 6 Countries: A Comparative Analysis of Selected Educational Issues. Bangkok: UNESCO. Available html <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002267/226757E.pdf>. Accessed on 12 October 2016.

The lack of funding constrains the government from properly investing in the professional development of teachers through training and scholarships for post-graduate studies.

In-service training ensures that teachers' knowledge is updated and that they have the necessary pedagogical skills to make the lessons easy to understand, sustain the students' academic interest, develop the students' analytical skills, and enable students to appreciate complex ideas.

However, for 2016, the national government only allocated PhP38,662,000 for the training of teachers in Region V. At first glance, the figure seems satisfactory. However, it has to be divided among 13 school divisions and teachers in all schools across the region. Using 2012 figures of teacher population in the region as 38,932, the budget allocation for teacher training for 2016 will only amount to PhP993 per teacher. Thus, the budgetary increases may actually not have a considerable impact on improving the quality of education. The funds could be augmented by the SEF but most LSBs allocate them for sports activities and other district-wide school events.

Many Schools are Unable to Provide Child-Centered, Conducive Learning Environment

Inconsistent Improvements in Participation and Cohort Survival Rates Across Provinces and Genders

The region has a high elementary school net enrollment ratio at above 90 percent since 2012. Net enrollment represents the percent percentage of students who entered primary school education vis-à-vis the total school age population. However in the last three years, the ratio has been marked by a downward trend. From a high of 96.7 percent, the net enrollment rate went down to 91.09 percent, which is a very significant and worrisome drop in the net enrollment rates.

One of the possible reasons for the drop in the first grade enrollment is compulsory kindergarten education, which serves as a prerequisite to entry into first grade. Either parents are not aware of this prerequisite, or they do not appreciate the significance and substance of kindergarten education in the current K to 12 program. Another possible cause is linked to bloated enrollment figures to prevent the closure of schools unable to meet the minimum number. With the introduction of the computerization of school registers featuring the permanent assignment of Learner Reference Numbers, the concern has been potentially addressed.

Among the different provinces, Albay has the highest net enrollment ratio at almost 91 percent; while Camarines Sur has the lowest at 88 percent (see table below). The figures indicate that despite the vigorous campaigns of the government leading to the MDG targeted date, a significant number of children are still not entering the school system. This is especially true in the provinces of Masbate, Sorsogon, and Camarines Sur.

Net enrollment rates for females are slightly higher than males. Table 15 shows this trend across four years. Although the differences are negligible, it would be good to understand the reason for the lower net enrollment among male students.

Table 15. Elementary Net Enrollment Ratio, Select Bicol School Divisions, 2012-2015

Division	Net Enrollment Ratio(NER)											
	2012			2013			2014			2015		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Albay	95.84%	96.31%	96.07%	95.21%	95.55%	95.37%	94.32%	94.80%	94.55%	90.77%	91.16%	90.96%
CamSur	94.86%	95.38%	95.11%	93.36%	93.17%	93.27%	92.42%	92.72%	92.56%	87.89%	88.33%	88.10%
Sorsogon	96.81%	96.02%	96.43%	94.09%	93.78%	93.94%	92.30%	91.45%	91.89%	89.86%	88.38%	89.14%
Masbate	94.11%	95.06%	94.57%	93.74%	94.58%	94.15%	90.70%	92.43%	91.54%	88.66%	89.39%	89.01%
Region Total	96.53%	97.08%	96.79%	95.25%	95.76%	95.50%	93.57%	94.49%	94.02%	90.75%	91.45%	91.09%

Source: Department of Education Regional Office-Region V

There is a marked improvement in the cohort survival rate in the four year period, which means that for those who entered the school system, the school may be doing enough to keep them long enough to graduate. In 2012, two out of ten children in the Region who enrolled in first grade will not graduate from elementary school; however, by 2015 only one out of ten will not graduate (see table below). The drastic improvement in the cohort survival rate is possibly a result of the government pulling out all the stops to improve the statistics of the country in the last few years leading to the MDG. It is not known whether the trend will continue over the next few years. The figures are also better than the national figures of around three out of ten students eventually dropping out from elementary school before graduating. Comparing across different provinces in the region, Masbate has the poorest cohort survival rate but has actually achieved a lot of progress over the last three years.

As with net enrollment ratio, the data for the cohort survival rate for male students is lower than female students in all years of the available data (see Table 16). In 2015, only two of ten male students will not finish elementary school among those who entered first grade, while one out of ten female students will not graduate. However, there is also a marked improvement of cohort survival rate by gender from 2012-2015.

Table 16. Elementary Cohort Survival Rate, Select School Divisions Bicol Region, 2012-2015

Division	Cohort Survival Rate											
	2012			2013			2014			2015		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Albay	75.72%	83.39%	79.30%	89.82%	94.98%	92.28%	87.49%	91.68%	89.46%	85.92%	92.50%	88.97%
CamSur	74.73%	82.40%	78.32%	85.34%	91.11%	88.09%	87.12%	91.33%	89.11%	83.83%	88.82%	86.15%
Sorsogon	74.24%	83.91%	78.66%	85.90%	91.52%	88.52%	83.80%	89.17%	86.31%	87.48%	91.09%	89.17%
Masbate	63.35%	75.52%	68.96%	72.33%	81.88%	76.78%	76.73%	82.93%	79.68%	83.37%	88.89%	85.96%
Region Total	73.81%	82.62%	77.91%	83.64%	90.25%	86.75%	84.37%	89.08%	86.60%	86.53%	91.64%	88.92%

Source: Department of Education Regional Office-Region V

In 2012, two out of ten students in the Region will eventually drop out from the particular grade level they are in. By 2015, the figure was reduced to one out ten students. There is also higher completion rate for females compared to males as shown in Table 17. This could reflect the poorer performance of male students in academics, which could be attributed to their likelihood of exhibiting unruly behavior, leading teachers to ignore them and show less interest in their learning in contrast to the more attentive female students. Existing gender stereotypes may also suggest that boys can be mistreated and develop a negative relationship with school.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ United Nations Girls' Educative Initiative. No Date. "Why are Boys Underperforming in Education?" Available html http://www.ungei.org/report_why_are_boys_underperforming_FINAL.pdf

Table 17. Elementary Completion Rate, Select School Division Bicol Region, 2012-2016

Division	Completion Rate											
	2012			2013			2014			2015		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Albay	74.36%	82.58%	78.19%	88.51%	94.43%	91.34%	86.12%	90.97%	88.40%	84.24%	91.86%	87.79%
CamSur	72.65%	81.31%	76.72%	83.13%	90.23%	86.51%	84.76%	90.42%	87.45%	81.36%	87.87%	84.41%
Sorsogon	73.02%	83.28%	77.71%	84.18%	90.94%	87.35%	82.34%	88.29%	85.12%	86.41%	91.04%	88.58%
Masbate	60.92%	74.21%	67.06%	69.70%	80.69%	74.85%	73.74%	81.69%	77.55%	80.82%	87.98%	84.20%
Region Total	71.77%	81.56%	76.33%	81.63%	89.67%	85.42%	82.37%	88.35%	85.21%	84.46%	90.86%	87.46%

Source: Department of Education Regional Office-Region V

The figures for high school are starker, with substantially lower net enrollment rates compared to elementary school (see Table 18). In 2012, out of ten high school age children, four are not enrolled in school, leaving these children with only an elementary education. In 2015, the figures improved slightly with three in ten students being enrolled in high school. This has implications on employability outside the informal sector and productivity as citizens. Their livelihood opportunities may be limited to manual labor or underpaying jobs. Data also points to a gender bias in education, as more females proceed to high school compared to male students.

Table 18. High School Net Enrollment Ratio, Select School Division Bicol Region, 2012-2016

Division	Net Enrollment Ratio											
	2012			2013			2014			2015		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Albay	53.47%	64.16%	58.59%	56.83%	67.60%	61.99%	57.47%	68.07%	62.55%	63.80%	74.64%	69.00%
CamSur	50.15%	62.46%	56.05%	53.35%	65.00%	58.93%	51.75%	63.58%	57.42%	58.16%	70.50%	64.07%
Sorsogon	57.07%	70.26%	63.37%	59.82%	72.08%	65.68%	58.77%	70.80%	64.52%	64.58%	76.75%	70.39%
Masbate	42.39%	57.41%	49.62%	46.17%	61.35%	53.47%	47.10%	62.12%	54.32%	54.06%	69.01%	61.25%
Region Total	54.69%	67.54%	60.87%	57.52%	70.22%	63.63%	57.16%	69.60%	63.14%	63.45%	76.06%	69.51%

Source: Department of Education Regional Office-Region V

The completion rates for high school in the region, as seen in Table 19, also present interesting data. In 2012, of ten students who enroll, three will not complete the grade level, which means they will drop out in the middle of the year. Improvements were reached in 2015 with only two out of ten students dropping out from the grade level, which indicates intervention programs to retain students in school may be working. This needs further study to confirm. There is higher completion rate for females across all years (see table below).

Table 19. High School Completion Rate, Select School Division Bicol Region, 2012-2016

Division	Completion Rate											
	2012			2013			2014			2015		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Albay	70.02%	83.84%	76.81%	75.62%	88.77%	82.03%	76.72%	86.38%	81.47%	74.03%	88.16%	80.85%
Camari- nes Sur	61.25%	76.73%	68.90%	69.81%	82.93%	76.30%	70.35%	82.29%	76.20%	67.27%	80.90%	73.92%
Sorsogon	65.31%	78.59%	71.78%	68.88%	83.38%	75.89%	68.37%	82.13%	75.03%	69.22%	86.10%	77.56%
Masbate	58.85%	70.43%	64.70%	61.75%	72.22%	67.08%	65.92%	75.12%	70.62%	63.74%	76.26%	70.05%
Region Total	62.78%	77.70%	70.15%	68.26%	81.69%	74.90%	70.58%	82.06%	76.26%	68.85%	82.77%	75.68%

Source: Department of Education Regional Office-Region V

Comparing genders in Table 20, more females will finish high school (eight out of ten) compared to males (seven out of ten). The gender disparities could be because of the lower performance of male students in class because being studious and hardworking are more regarded as feminine attributes. It could also be because male children from rural areas are expected to help out in the family economy by participating in farming or fishing activities. In a study, it was pointed out that parents “consider boys more useful outside of school, due to their potentially higher wages.” This is reinforced by gender stereotypes that boys are stronger and more independent, “attributes that are considered useful in manual roles and in agrarian societies”.¹⁶⁸

168 United Nations Girls' Educative Initiative. No Date. "Why are Boys Underperforming in Education?" Available html http://www.ungei.org/report_why_are_boys_underperforming_FINAL.pdf

Table 20. High School Cohort Survival Rate, Select School Division Bicol Region, 2012-2016

Division	Cohort Survival Rate											
	2012			2013			2014			2015		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Albay	73.91%	86.11%	79.91%	79.10%	91.10%	84.94%	79.59%	88.06%	83.75%	76.44%	89.08%	82.54%
Camari- nes Sur	66.07%	79.88%	72.91%	74.21%	85.73%	79.89%	73.29%	84.44%	78.73%	70.85%	83.25%	76.90%
Sorsogon	68.26%	81.20%	74.55%	71.68%	85.57%	78.38%	70.54%	83.75%	76.94%	70.10%	86.10%	77.74%
Masbate	61.65%	72.79%	67.27%	64.15%	74.17%	69.25%	68.01%	77.02%	72.62%	65.94%	77.43%	71.74%
Region Total	67.03%	80.63%	73.76%	71.85%	84.21%	77.95%	73.38%	83.95%	78.60%	71.27%	84.11%	77.58%

Source: Department of Education Regional Office-Region V

In both elementary and secondary school, there is a higher percentage of boys dropping out of school compared to girls. They are also more likely to drop out or not graduate. In the validation workshop with children, they agreed with the finding that there are more males quitting school. Some of the reasons they cited for this is: hanging out with wrong friends (*nabarkada*), acquiring vices from peers, boys are less disciplined and hence, opt to hang out rather than go to school. There is a definite need for parental and community guidance to address these problems.

Inferior Structures and Non-Functioning Educational Facilities

Schools also face shortages in water and sanitation facilities, school chairs, and books.¹⁶⁹

For instance, as of 25 July 2015, the textbook backlog, especially with the launch of the K 12 Program, was pegged at 60 million, which means that a number of textbooks had to be produced to ensure a 1:1 student-textbook ratio.¹⁷⁰ Although the Aquino government had repeatedly claimed that student-textbook ratio was already 1:1, accounts from the communities claim otherwise. It is not clear whether the problem lies in the logistics of distribution or the production itself.

169 Pastrana, Dante. 2014. "Dilapidated, overcrowded public schools in the Philippines." World Socialist Website. 20 June 2014. Available html <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2014/06/20/phil-j20.html>. Accessed on 23 September 2016.

170 Atienza, Almi Ilagan. 2015. "Education and Health." Philippine Daily Inquirer. Available html <https://www.pressreader.com/philippines/philippine-daily-inquirer/20150725/281517929817701>

Moreover, there is not enough provision for teachers to cover photocopying costs and the purchase of additional visual materials, and chalk.¹⁷¹ There is allocation for such provisions but it is not enough to last the year. The situation inevitably affects teachers as they get discouraged or irritable due to the lack of key teaching tools.¹⁷² Eventually, the teachers' effectiveness is affected, compromising the students' capacity to learn and absorb knowledge.

School facilities are important because they provide conducive learning environments students. Studies¹⁷³ have shown that lack of resources in school impact on children's mental and learning capacities because children are frustrated or disheartened by their surroundings.¹⁷⁴ The lack of facilities also hinders children from participating making them vulnerable to exclusion. For instance, when schools lack textbooks, children would be hesitant to share in class discussions or unable to submit homework. Classrooms that do not have enough desks could cause discomfort to students who have to share one table with two or more students. In such an environment, effective learning is constrained.

The inadequate provision of facilities in public schools creates barriers to equitable education, further marginalizing students in poor communities. In contrast, private schools provide better facilities. These barriers to learning compromise poor children's opportunity to succeed in life because the school system is the primary arbiter of inequality.

With the limited budget provided by the national government, there is really no going beyond the minimum standards it had set for itself or worse, standards are not even reached at all. This is the reason why dilapidated classrooms exist in Bicol; there are no libraries and science laboratories in many schools. Otherwise they are not at par with national standards of meeting the curricular and student needs, and there are no computer labs that have internet access. Most are equipped with computers that are not functional given no allocation for computer maintenance, according to validation participants.

Consequently, many schools are not considered as conducive learning environments. Minimal resources enable the government to construct only sub-standard structures that are often cramped, dark, and dingy with opaque windows that block the entry of natural light.

171 Pastrana, Dante. 2014. "Dilapidated, overcrowded public schools in the Philippines." World Socialist Website. 20 June 2014. Available html <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2014/06/20/phil-j20.html>. Accessed on 23 September 2016.

172 M. A. Milkie, C. H. Warner. Classroom Learning Environments and the Mental Health of First Grade Children. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 2011; 52 (1): 4.

173 Schneider, Mark. 2002. "Do School Facilities Affect Student Outcomes?" National Clearinghouse for Education Facilities. Available html <http://www.ncef.org/pubs/outcomes.pdf>

174 Penn State University. 2015. "The Importance of School Facilities in Improving Student Outcomes." Available html <https://sites.psu.edu/cee-pa/2015/06/07/the-importance-of-school-facilities-in-improving-student-outcomes/>.

This is especially true of the Marcos-era classrooms that have wooden shutter windows. One child shared that the classrooms are so small that it becomes very hot during daytime.

Classrooms are also in a state of disrepair. A few of the schools visited by the research team have holes in the ceiling, causing leaks during the rainy season. The tables and chairs are cramped with two, sometimes, three students sharing one desk. There are hardly any materials in classrooms that would entice children to pursue education as a serious endeavor. Children who participated in the FGD shared that to remedy the shortage of chairs, they brought their own. Not everyone is given books; oftentimes they have to share with other students or they have to come to class early to borrow the teacher's book so they can study before classes start.



Existing learning facilities also merit upgrades. In one elementary school, a child-friendly learning center equipped with books, science teaching tools (e.g. human anatomy model), play area, audiovisual equipment and other materials donated by an NGO was not utilized due to the absence of permanent staff to manage it. There was also no staff to oversee the facility previously; teachers who brought their students to the Center shared responsibility of taking care of it. With its closure, the facility is already showing initial signs of deterioration. This is not an isolated case in the region. Principals reportedly padlock computer laboratories supposedly to avoid breakage of the computer units or their libraries to preserve the pristine condition of books. Internet facilities, in the absence of libraries could be an alternative; however, either schools have no funds or there is no internet access in rural communities and in a few cases, there is no electricity in the localities.

In schools, computers were bought as part of the DepEd's Computerization Program to "provide public schools with appropriate technologies that would enhance the teaching-learning process [to] meet the challenges of the 21st century" (DepEd Order 78, series of 2010).¹⁷⁵ However, teachers report that many of the computers were no longer functioning. In one school visited, all six computers were not working, while another one was appropriated for office use. While the computerization endeavor was laudable, the government did not foresee the need for budgetary allocation for computer maintenance, resulting in the program's failed implementation in many areas, according to participants of the validation workshop.

Water and sanitation facilities do not exist or if they do, the conditions are unsanitary. In one school visited, there was no running water supply for the school toilet facilities and it was littered with garbage.

Over time, beyond the construction of classrooms in compliance with the necessary numbers, international and child-friendly classroom design standards must be met. Better funded public schools in other nations have audiovisual technologies installed in each classroom. The number and spacing of desks to enable students to freely move around the classroom and interact with fellow students and teachers are also considered. Glass windows are installed to enable natural lighting, among other refinements, making the classrooms more conducive places for learning and interaction.

Curricular Reforms Meet Challenges in Implementation

Curricular reforms are necessary to ensure education responds to the needs of students. They integrate "changes in educational views and orientations, curricular content, teaching approaches and pedagogies, as well as other necessary changes in curriculum planning and implementation processes and in educational management and administration."¹⁷⁶

Reforms are essential in "today's rapidly changing environment, context, aspirations and expectations". Over the last 30 years or so, the DepEd has only conducted three curricular reforms. Though the last one gave birth to important changes in pedagogical approach, it was not without the proverbial 'growing pains'.¹⁷⁷

175 Department of Education. 2010. Guidelines on the Implementation of the DepEd Computerization Program (DCP). Available <http://www.deped.gov.ph/orders/do-78-s-2010>

176 UNESCO. 2014. Education Systems in ASEAN + 6 Countries: A Comparative Analysis of Selected Educational Issues.

Bangkok: UNESCO. Available html <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002267/226757E.pdf>. Accessed on 12 October 2016.

177 Ibid.

While the following developments are targeted toward achieving positive developments in the education sector, the results have been mixed due to challenges in implementation.

Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)

The DepEd introduced the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) as part of its efforts at curricular enhancement. The Program postulates children learn better in the language they best understand and that a strong foundation in the mother language should be laid first before learning additional languages. Learning in the original language enables students to grasp basic concepts more easily and develop appropriate cognitive and reasoning skills.¹⁷⁸

Numerous studies have shown that learning initially in the mother tongue provides young children significant benefits in learning such as: improved academic achievement and the development of stronger academic abilities; increased efficiency as it eliminates hurdles in learning using an unfamiliar language; better chances for children to engage in higher order thinking skills that help develop analytical skills and thought articulation; and development of competencies in other learning areas.¹⁷⁹

In MTB-MLE, Language 2 is introduced as they continue learning in Language 1 until they become academically proficient. Language 3 is introduced later while Language 1 remains to be a medium of instruction. Ideally, MTB-MLE would help children cope in school and contribute to addressing the following concerns: low achievement test scores as students become better learners with stronger academic abilities; and dropout rates among students who experience frustration from the difficulty of learning in an unfamiliar language.

Currently, learning materials are in 19 Philippine languages: Tagalog, Kapampangan, Pangasinense, Iloko, Bikol, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Waray, Tausug, Maguindanaoan, Maranao, Chabacano, Ybanag, Ivatan, Sambal, Aklanon Kinaray-a, Yakan and Surigaonon. While MTB-MLE is available in major Philippine languages, this becomes a problem in a country with some 187 documented languages.¹⁸⁰

Likewise, Bicol has several languages and dialects, such as Bikol Rinconada (spoken at Iriga-Buhi-Nabua-Baao- Bato-Balatan area), the Oasnun and Darageño dialects spoken

178 ACDP Indonesia. 2014. Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education. Working Paper. Available html <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/176282/ino-mother-tongue-multilingual-education.pdf>.

179 Department of Education. 2013. K to 12 Curriculum Guide Mother Tongue (Grades 1 to 10). December. Available html http://www.deped.gov.ph/sites/default/files/Final%20Mother%20Tongue%20Grades%201-3%2001.21.2014_.pdf

180 Ethnologue: Languages of the World. No Date. Philippines. Available html <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/PH>.

in Oas and Daraga, Bikol Naga (Camarines Sur), Bikol Sorsogon (Sorsogon), Bikol Catanduanes, and Bikol Partido (municipalities surrounding Lagonoy Gulf), while two Visayan languages, Sorsoganon and Masbateño or Minasbate, are spoken in Masbate and Sorsogon; among others.

The phase-in of the project was faced with difficulties on the part of teachers and students in some areas of the Bicol Region. Learning materials are in Bikol Naga, which students in some areas are not familiar with since they speak a different dialect in the community (e.g. Rinconada, Libon, Buhinon, etc). Thus, this defeated the purpose of the MTB-MLB Program. The students are faced with the same prospect as learning in either English or Filipino.

Given this situation, teachers are forced to translate the materials in class as they explain lessons to students in the local dialect. While lessons are conducted in the local language/dialect, students are made to read in Bikol Naga as these were the only available materials, which do little to increase their reading and comprehension abilities.



This is especially true in areas where contextualization training has not been conducted. Teachers pointed out that this became a bigger problem if the teacher in the barangay is from another area that speaks another dialect and may not be familiar with the community dialect.

The DepEd Regional Office in Bicol has the task of developing and reproducing materials for the MTB-MLE as the task of production of materials has been devolved to local DepEd units. The DepEd Central Office tasked its Regional Offices to develop story books in big and small book format and for listening; flash/activity cards (letters/numbers); basic sight words; and thematic picture chart for oral literacy. The agency provided funds for the production of the said materials.¹⁸¹

Some teachers were able to attend an NGO-sponsored training on orthography, contextualization, and development of reading materials in the Bikol language and as a result, they were able to transition to the MTB-MLE Program.

K-12 Program

In 2015, the K-12 program was launched. The program has long been advocated by the education sector. The country was one of the last three, along with Angola and Djibouti, to scrap the 10-year education cycle.¹⁸²

It adds kindergarten and two years of senior high school in the mandated education cycle for children. The program consists of six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School, Senior high school students can choose from: Academic; Technical-Vocational-Livelihood; and Sports and Arts track.

A salient feature of the program is that students would already be employable if they graduate and pass the certification tests under the TVL track. In addition, the government has also initiated other reform programs such as the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), the Spiral Progression Approach in Learning for K-12, and other similar programs.

However, the roll-out of the program was challenged by transition issues related to availability of specialist teachers and facilities, the shortage of public schools that offer Senior High School programs, and complaints that the program creates unnecessary strains on the family economy. The government addressed the financial problem by offering a voucher program, which provides subsidies for tuition fee to qualified students to pursue senior high school in private high schools or State Universities or Colleges.¹⁸³

181 Department of Education. 2011. Department Order 90 Guidelines on the Utilization of Downloaded Funds for Materials Development and Production of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) Program. Available html <http://www.deped.gov.ph/orders/do-90-s-201>.

182 Office of the President. 2016. The K to 12 Basic Education Program. Available html <http://www.gov.ph/k-12/>

183 Department of Education

While the implementation of the K-12 program came with considerable good intentions, it was met with opposition nationwide because of the additional two years of expenses it entails for parents for the senior high school education of students.

As a stop-gap measure, the government offered a voucher program that subsidizes the tuition fee of qualified students in private schools or state university or colleges (SCU) of their choice. However, despite the voucher program, parents still need to shell out cash for their children's allowances, food, transportation, school projects, and other similar expenses. With this and the failure to fully understand the benefits of K-12, some parents have asked their children to drop out from school.

Teachers and schools also warranted more preparation to handle senior high school.¹⁸⁴ Select master teachers were given TOT (training of trainers), who in turn provided mass training in their respective school divisions for high school and the regional office for elementary school. However, the training was compressed into shorter training packages compromising teaching quality and preparedness. There is also no clear indication if there will be follow up training later on. Teacher shortages in some tracks such as STEM, ABM, and TVL were pervasive, according to validation participants.

Facilities were either absent or lacking, particularly for vocational programs for senior high students. For instance, schools do not have ovens for bread and pastry production or welding machines for welding classes, defeating the objective of providing hands on training for the technical vocational livelihood (TVL) track.

In some areas, the problem has been addressed through partnerships with TESDA regional training centers and affiliate schools for equipment and expertise sharing. However, not all communities have access to TESDA facilities. This marginalizes many students limited access to full TVL programs on account of lack of equipment and expertise in their localities. In the region, TESDA is located only in the following communities: Camarines Sur (Pasacao, Pili, Libmanan), Albay (Guinobatan, Malilipot), Camarines Norte (Labo), Sorsogon (Bulusan, Castilia), Catanduanes (Bato), and Masbate (Milagros).

184 Quintas, Kristine and May Miasco. 2016. "K TO 12 Are we ready for Senior High?" Philippine Star. Available html <http://www.philstar.com/cebu-news/2016/04/26/1577040/k-12-are-we-ready-senior-high-conclusion>

The Alternative Learning System (ALS), Alternate Delivery Modes and School-Based Management Grant

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) is a parallel learning system that provides a substitute for formal instruction for OSY, adults who did not complete their education, or those who have no access to formal education. When one does not have or cannot access formal education in schools, ALS is an important alternative that helps students gain literacy or accreditation and equivalency to graduate from elementary or high school.

In Bicol, the ALS is supported by LGUs and barangays, which enables the program to continue. The LGUs pay for the salary of mobile teachers. Schools work closely with the barangays to identify community members who are interested to pursue their education through the ALS. The Mobile Teachers go around different areas to teach. Barangays allocate space for the purpose. This enables people from the region to gain certification to pursue further studies or to gain literacy and numeracy at the minimum.

Aside from the ALS, the DepEd instituted Alternative Modes of Delivery (AMD) Programs in 2011 through DepEd Order 53, series of 2011 to improve performance indicators of schools and to enable access to education to marginalized students who work in farms and other industries and those who live in far-flung communities. The program is composed of the following: Enhanced Instructional Management by Parents Community and Teachers (e-IMPACT) System; Modified In-School, Off-School Approach (MISOSA); Home Schooling Program (HSP); and the Multigrade Program in Philippine Education (MPPE) for elementary students and the Drop Out Reduction Program (DORP) for secondary school. These are meant to improve student performance and increase their chances of completing their education.

The School-based Management (SBM) Grant, on the other hand, was launched to improve the performance of the schools, in terms of student participation and school attendance, completion rates and student learning outcomes. The grant is for the enhancement of the teaching and learning experience, improvement of school management and administrative processes and strengthening the resiliency of disadvantaged schools.

While the ALS continues, the ADM and the SBM have been put on hold by project leaders appointed after the DepEd went through a national rationalization program in 2013 according to an official from the DepEd Regional Office. Some ADMs persisted, but only those that have the support of LGUs. The monitoring of SBMs, on the other hand, stopped in 2014 because of the non-completion of the revised assessment tool. The ALS

is also not totally problem free since there are still communities and children who are not being reached by the program.

Efforts are being done to revitalize ADM and SBM. For instance, the Open High School module was reviewed and revised through Plan International assistance. It is undergoing validation and will be piloted in Bicol and another region in 2017. The revised manual of the School Governing Council (governance committee overseeing SBM) is being validated as of writing time as well as the training of school heads.

Rights through Education (Contribution to Realization of Child Rights)

Education enables children awareness of their own rights, while providing them the necessary skills and attitudes to assert them, according to UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education Qian Tang. This should ideally take place in a “safe and stimulating environment” and through “mutual respect and understanding.”¹⁸⁵

However, such an enabling environment is dependent on whether pervasive community practices and beliefs promote awareness and dialogue to reinforce a rights culture. This also includes participation and democratic governance within the sector through policies and structures that empower its key players, including students, parents and teachers. It also warrants government measures that ensure that the child’s well-being is taken care of in and out of the classroom, by concretely raising and resolving relevant issues on their protection, such as bullying and corporal punishment.

Facets of Philippine culture both promote and hinder child rights

It is possible for local cultural beliefs about children to clash with children’s rights.

For instance, the culture of forgiveness that Christianity promotes may undermine the best interest of the child, as exemplified by co-faculty members using sympathy for PWDs as a reason not to encourage reporting the complaint of sexual harassment by a female student against her teacher.

¹⁸⁵ Children’s rights are human rights. http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/right-to-education/single-view/news/childrens_rights_are_human_rights/

The hierarchical culture, on the other hand, dissuades children from asserting their rights toward authority figures like their teachers. When a teacher abuses his or her authority, some children would rather drop out or keep silent than fight for their rights.

This can also be seen as learned behavior at the home as parents impress upon children the need to respect elders, which is then reinforced in schools. Adults also overstep their bounds from time to time or abuse their power, as in the case of a teacher who banged the head of a student on the blackboard after failing to answer a question.

This may be balanced out by the existence of official policies (policies against violence against children, bullying, and harassment) and bodies (such as the CPC or the student government) that protect children's rights, only to a certain extent. Stakeholders, including teachers and school administrators, must still activate and utilize these tools for the benefit children.

There are occasions when children overstep their bounds and neglect their responsibilities towards adults as well. Some children have pointed out the unfavorable behavior of peers who disrespect or bully teachers and school administrators. With rights comes the burden of responsibility.

In some cases, the experiences of adults as children may serve as blinders that make them oblivious to reported abuses. In conversations with NGO staff, some regard bullying as part of growing up that they can relate to.

However, adopting such mindset overlooks the difficulties and possible negative effects on children. It is dangerous to generalize that children will not suffer any trauma just because they survived it.

Engendering a rights culture requires constant awareness raising and constant dialogue that will serve as venues for people to reconsider their cultural practices and beliefs, and to examine their roles in enabling children to claim their rights.

In Bicol, there are elements that enable children to enjoy their rights through the policy environment, legal mechanisms, as well as cultural practices; however, there are also elements that inhibit this. The challenge is to harness the elements that would further promote such advocacy.

Corporal punishment and bullying are key child protection issues in schools

Bullying in school

In an editorial published by the Philippine Star in 2015, it was reported by the DepEd that 31 incidents of bullying are reported in schools on a daily basis. In 2014 6,363 bullying complaints were filed with the DepEd in both public and private elementary and high schools. This increased by 21 percent from 5,236 complaints received the previous year.

Often, there is a fine line that separates bantering from bullying. Bullies may consider their behavior as having fun, without realizing its psychological or emotional impact on the victim, aside from physical injuries victims sustain. It has been found that bullied children experience anxiety, depression, health problems, and mental health problems.

To address the issue, Philippine Congress passed RA No. 10627 or the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013 on September 12, 2013. The Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Anti-Bullying Law was developed by the DepEd.

The Law ensures that policies and procedures are developed in schools to enable the protection of children from bullying and to involve parents in its prevention. The Anti-Bullying Act was seen by the DepEd as boosting its objective of developing schools into safe and caring, learner-centered institutions.

However, some teachers have limited experience in handling and recognizing cases of bullying, including employing proper intervention. Common strategies involve separating children from each other or relying on traditional methods of punishment directed against the perpetrator while victims are not provided psychological support. Some cases reported by children were also not acted on.

In the region, teachers share that they usually try to resolve the issue of bullying themselves. However, repetitive behavior calls for parents of the bully to be summoned to solicit their help in dealing with the problem. The case is brought to the principal or other higher authorities if the issue is not resolved.

However, experts advise going beyond informing the parents who may not be fully equipped to manage their children, especially if the bullying behavior stems from family problems.

Corporal punishment

Corporal punishment is not necessarily frowned upon in Philippine culture. Many adults believe spanking can be used moderately to discipline children. Reports come every so often where teachers have been reported to resort to corporal punishment such as spanking, pinching, and whipping with a belt to discipline misbehaving students.

Child-focused advocacy groups have, for a long time, been pushing for the Anti-Corporal Punishment Law; however, Philippine Congress has repeatedly delayed the passage of this important piece of legislation. However, DepEd has prohibited, through its Child Protection Policy (DepEd Order No. 40, series of 2012), the use of any form of corporal punishment or humiliation of students to discipline them.

Despite this, some teachers still use corporal punishment such as beating/whipping using a stick or belt, spanking, being made to stay or squat under the sun for a certain period of time, pinching, or being verbally abused as shared by the participants of the validation workshop. There are firsthand accounts of children who shared their and their classmates' experiences of corporal punishment. Some teachers resort to physical violence to deal with unruly students especially when they lose control of situations. For instance, a teacher hurled a piece of chalk at a student which caused the student to drop out, while another teacher lobbed a glass at a student.

However, teachers and administrators qualify there are now fewer cases of this as there are existing DepEd guidelines addressing the problem. While there is no law yet that penalizes the use of corporal punishment, the creation of the CPP has offered some degree of protection to children.

The DepEd also ordered the establishment of Child Protection Committees (CPC) that would handle and advocate for child protection issues in the schools. Although validation workshop participants said that there are CPCs in their schools, it is not clear how many schools have operational and non-functioning CPCs.

However, there are positive indications that some CPCs are well-established. For instance, a teacher shared the role of their CPC in handling the case of a child battered by her

father. Upon investigation, the CPC found out that the child's drunkard father regularly beat her up. Because the father did not show up when he was summoned by the CPC, the CPC referred the case to the barangay. The CPC and the barangay agreed to place the child temporarily with a teacher to protect her from further violence. After a few weeks and a promissory note from the father, the child was returned to his custody. According to the teacher, there had been no repeat instances of abuse reported by the child afterwards.

However, there are also indications that some are problematic.

FGD participants shared the case of a male teacher who allegedly sexually harassed a female student. Instead of helping, some teachers attempted to dissuade the child from complaining because of the teacher's disability ("maawa sa kalagayan ng teacher"). This story highlights the need for effective Child Protection Committees (CPC) to address issues like this. Part of the task of the CPC is to advocate for children's welfare and rights in the school and to initiate information dissemination to protect children from abuse. The lack of awareness on the best interest of the child and the failure to report the case to the proper authorities are clear indications that CPCs are non-functional in some schools.



Teachers who joined the validation workshop in one area could not cite adequate processes in handling cases of abuse or bullying. A principal shared that a child was constantly bullied by a village thug on the way to school. The victim was fleeced and even hurt on one occasion. Instead of immediately reporting the case to the barangay or the police to ensure the child's protection, the principal merely informed the parents about it. The DepEd conceptualized the CPC, among others, to "develop and implement a school-based referral and monitoring system," which involves "coordinating closely with the PNP, DSWD, NGOs and other non-governmental institutions" for cases that would require this.¹⁸⁶

186 Department of Education Child Protection Policy. 2012. http://www.deped.gov.ph/sites/default/files/order/2012/DO_s2012_40.pdf

The Legal Department of the DepEd Regional Office confirms the non-functionality of many CPCs. Their recent assessment yielded the conclusion that the CPP is not properly implemented, especially in relation to the prompt intervention, resolution, or reporting of cases to the Regional Office. Unreported cases are only discovered when parents file complaints with the Regional Office. As a remedy, the Legal Office implemented a strict timetable for reporting protection cases by the principal. The office has also instituted sanctions for school personnel that delay reporting cases, thus improving compliance to the directive.

The problem is not isolated in schools. Some child-focused NGOs neither have clear policies nor a clear referral network for cases of abuse. This has profound effects on the protection of children since these NGOs often deal directly with children.

There is child participation in schools but it could be more meaningful

To increase student participation in schools in matters that are important to them, the DepEd released a series of Department Orders in 2016 enjoining schools to establish the Supreme Pupil Government (SPG for elementary students) and the Supreme Student Government (SSG for high school students) in all schools nationwide. The two bodies train students in civic responsibility and community participation.

The Student Government serves as a co-curricular student organization authorized to operate and implement pertinent programs, projects and activities in schools; lay the groundwork for good governance, volunteerism, unity and cooperation by providing the students various venues where they can improve their leadership knowledge, skills and attitudes; and train students to become better members of society in accordance with the ideals and principles of participatory democracy and good citizenship.”

The School Governing Council (SGC) serves as a forum for parents, students, teachers, community stakeholders and the school head to collaborate in improving student learning outcomes or the overall performance of the school. It enables students to participate in promoting the rights and welfare of students in school, come up with programs or activities on relevant issues and concerns, provide recommendations to school authorities in matters that affect students, and provide a venue for students to voice out their opinions, suggestions, and grievances. It is a very good venue, especially for officers to learn about responsibility and leadership. The student organization has a lot of potential in training children in community service and participation, fundraising, and project planning and implementation. It works under the premise of “shared responsibility” in children’s

development by enabling community stakeholders to participate and have a stake in improving schools.

However, SGCs have been criticized as non-inclusive, non-participatory, or in some cases, non-functional. Among functional SGCs, leadership is centralized with the school supervisor with minimal participation by different stakeholders. A more effective system would engage key stakeholders for feedback for continuous improvement beyond compliance.

The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is a venue for parents to voice their concerns regarding the education of their children and to participate in its improvement. They are allowed to run fundraising activities for the school, send representation to the SGC, participate in school inspection and observe in the school's procurement activities, and participate in various school activities according to DepEd Order 54, series of 2009.

However given these limited activities, the PTA is unable to reach its potential in: building a robust parent involvement program; identifying issues of concern and work with educators to address these issues; providing opportunities for professional development for its parent membership; and engaging in the school-based decision making processes.¹⁸⁷

In Bicol, the PTAs' involvement is mostly reduced to fundraising activities to build perimeter walls, minor repairs for classrooms, and school activities. In the words of one teacher, they turn to parents for their fundraising needs. Parents have spearheaded fundraising activities such as the school bingo or beauty contests for the financial needs of the school as enumerated above.

The most common source of funds are the PTA fees. However, there are some cases of creative use. Some PTAs have volunteered for the Feeding Program; the Brigada Eskwela Program which helps out in the clean-up of schools, minor repairs, and preparing classrooms for the opening of classes; and an LGU- initiated program called "Nanay Ko, Teacher Ko" where mothers were trained to help slow readers cope with the task. The next step would be involvement in discussing issues that are relevant to parents and teachers, including academic enrichment and evaluation of education programs, so they can equally take part in decision-making processes.

Supreme Pupil, Student Government is a body that allows students to represent themselves in school, especially in matters that concern them.

187 Leonard Stavisky School. No Data. PTA Roles and Responsibilities. Available html <https://sites.google.com/a/ptaofps242.com/help-wanted/responsibilities>

General Conclusions

Fulfilling children's rights to education in Bicol is affected by an interplay of national, local, family, and individual factors. These factors either reinforce the right to education (legislation and development plans), or limit it (absence of resources in poorer municipalities). The inaction of local leaders is another challenge.

Meaningfully promoting children's rights to education can only be reached by understanding these factors and how they are linked. The paradox of education is that it can create able citizens who will fuel economic growth and may be the key to crack the poverty trap; however, national poverty constrains the full enjoyment of this right.

Education programs would be more successful if the issue of poverty, the lack of resources, and factors that are contributing to the scarcity of resources (misgovernance, corruption, population density, etc.) are addressed synchronously, both at national and local levels or individual level.

General Issues on Education as a Bicolano Child's Right

The national government budget for education is low. Mechanisms to augment the national government funds exists in local government but funds are likewise nil. The budget that is available is not enough to meet the needs of current schools as it is and are subject to inefficient execution and vulnerable to disasters and emergencies.

The national government has made a lot of gains in addressing the problems of education resulting from recent improvements in the economy and governance. These include budget increase, curriculum enhancement, and better teacher hiring standards.

However, in rural areas, even with more funding, the quality education needs of 29 million children, aged five to 17 years old, are not fully met.

The national government prioritized funding schools with higher enrollment rates. Rural schools such as those found in Bicol have to implement multi-grade classrooms, have two classes share a room, convert stock and other rooms into classrooms, lack of substitute teachers, conduct under trees or on the school stage, build infrastructure below international standards, lack of basic facilities like toilet, libraries, and computer

laboratories, textbooks, etc. These results to already poor communities being given access to education that is inferior.

With certain aspects of education devolved, 1% of real property tax is allocated to SEF, and other funding sources (GAD, LGU General Fund, Development Fund, SK Fund, etc.), LGUs and Regional DepEd offices are empowered. They can make the decisions that help local schools. The existence of these funds can exponentially improve education in local communities.

However, this does not happen as most LGUs and LSBs only use the SEF instead of appropriating funds from other sources to augment the education budget from DepEd.

This is especially true for fourth to sixth class municipalities in Bicol, which have smaller real property tax collections. There is also little transparency in accounting of the utilization of the SEF.

There are also inefficiencies in spending the education budget. In many documented cases, national school infrastructure programs have been delayed because of excessive bureaucracy or ‘red tape.’

The NDRR plans of the region remain highly relevant as Bicol is situated along the typhoon belt, active fault lines, and volcanoes. Its functionality however is largely dependent on the commitment of school heads to activate these structures.

Children are not involved in DRRM planning in the region. Engaging children in DRRM planning not only ingrains the culture of disaster preparedness in them, but also fulfills children’s right to participation.

Rights to Education

With limited government resources as stated above, the Philippines as well as Bicol is still short on classrooms and the existing classrooms have little to no funding for maintaining or improving rooms to make them accessible to children with disabilities or be at the most conducive learning environment for teaching and learning. High schools are also only in urbanized town centers, kilometers away from rural areas.

Students from financially-challenged families experience varied cases of marginalization that hinder them completing their education. These include:

- Hunger or malnutrition at the crucial stages of development leading to lasting cognitive impairments. They may also have little to no access to quality early childhood education, which could affect their cognitive development.
- Lack of personal resources increase the likelihood of dropping out. They may not be able to afford the additional costs to education or their family may require them to work.
- General conditions of their life may actually make them lose personal interest in getting an education.
- Teenage pregnancy.
- Bicol, being one of the poorest regions in the country, face concerns on infrastructure, teacher quality, and other similar variables.

There has been a significant decline in the net enrollment of first grade students in Bicol from 2012 to 2015. This can be attributed to the earlier enrollment age in first grade, or the lack of awareness among parents that children need to go through kindergarten before they can enroll in first grade. However, completion and cohort survival rates for elementary and secondary school have improved significantly.

Students in the Region drop out for different reasons such as poverty; lack of personal interest; hanging out with wrong friends; distance of home from schools especially for high school students; the need to work seasonally in agriculture or fishing or work as domestic workers or salesladies; and other similar reasons. The national and local governments are addressing the ALS and ADM to reach out to those who have dropped out of school.

In the region, few LGUs appear to be committed in mainstreaming ALS in the communities as they provide budget for the hiring and training of mobile teachers and the allocation of space in barangays for ALS classes. However, the ADMs have not been as successful as change in leadership in the DepEd has stalled its implementation. This has a lot of potential to address the problem of seasonal agricultural and fishing work especially with the Home Schooling Program.

Gender disparity is clear in both enrollment and completion rates, with figures heavily skewed in favor of females. However, the prevalence of teenage pregnancy continues to force female students to drop out.

Rights in Education

While teacher hiring figures have improved in the last six years at national, regional, and provincial levels, there are still numerous schools in the region, especially in the rural communities, that are still short on teachers.

Vetting standards for teachers have also become more stringent but there are still reports of poor teaching quality. This exemplifies the need for regular teacher evaluation and more resources for continuous training of teachers.

At the same time, programs such as ALS and ADMs give greater access to education outside the formal school system. Some aspects of education have also been devolved to LGUs, as they are in the best position to determine the education needs of their community. Curricular changes such as the K-12 Program and the MTB-MLB Program have been instituted. These reforms bring Philippine education on a par with international standards of education.

However, these have been met by serious problems on the ground. In Bicol, not all tracks (academic, TVL, sports, and arts and design) are available. There were teacher shortages and teachers hired to teach in SHS did not have the necessary skills and competencies to do so. Equipment for the TVL track in schools are lacking and not all communities had TESDA offices where they could use equipment for their vocational training.

The MTB-MLB program also suffered ground implementation due to the fact that multiple dialects exist within one local language. In Bicol, teachers had difficulty using materials because these were written in 'Bikol Naga.' Teachers and students had to translate and contextualize materials on their own to cater to local dialects.

Rights through Education

DepEd has mandated the creation of CPPs and the establishment of CPCs in schools but there are still cases where teachers and school heads show limited knowledge on proper protocols and referral systems for cases of abuse, bullying, or corporal punishment.

Child-focused NGOs are assisting LGUs and DepEd Bicol in providing basic services and improving education in the Region. They are involved in various activities from building infrastructure, training teachers, providing school materials, community development, and

other similar projects. However, there is a need to synchronize the work of these NGOs to ensure that resources are maximized and the greatest number of people is reached.

There are local cultural practices that are inimical to the protection of the rights of children; however, there are also cultural practices as well as government structures and systems that are helping build the rights culture in communities.

Significantly, the DepEd has ordered the creation of LSBs, SGCs, and PTAs in schools, which democratize decision-making processes and increase stakeholder participation in improving the quality of schools in the communities.

In schools, the SGC, PTA, and LSB are venues for parents and community members to participate in the improvement of education. However, school administrators and LGUs have yet to maximize their potential to contribute in improving education and include them in the decision-making process.

Responsibilities Analysis

The National Government is responsible for laying down the necessary structures (policies, processes, development plans, laws, organizations, offices, budget, etc.) and systems (referral systems, interagency cooperation, etc.) to ensure the enjoyment of the education and the protection of the other rights of children.

These structures and systems are cascaded to LGUs that have the principal duty of delivering the basic services to their communities, creating counterpart structures and systems, allocating local budget, and ensuring that policies, plans, and laws related to the education and protection of the rights and welfare of children are implemented in the community.

In the area of education, the general curricular and administrative directions, policies, budgets, and plans come from the Department of Education Central Office. These are cascaded to the Division Offices and Local Schools for implementation and contextualization. The local DepEd and the schools have the most crucial role in implementing the plans and programs that come from the central office. The success of programs is hinged on the local schools' ability to implement these on the ground.

However, the necessary support, including budgetary allocation and training for teachers, should also be adequately given by the national government for the programs to succeed.

CSOs, on the other hand, plug in the human (expertise) and financial resources that cannot be provided by both the National and Local Governments. These groups are important catalysts for the improvement of services provided by the government because of their capacities and commitment to social change.

However, most CSOs work independently, which has caused duplication of services in many communities or in some cases, competition with other CSOs. The formation of coalitions and networks that will enable resource sharing and cooperation will go a long way in addressing the needs of the communities.

In the Region, several large child-focused NGOs operate and provide various services for children ranging from community development, disaster response, to educational programs. International agencies such as the World Bank (WB), has also provided aid in strengthening the School-Based Management Program (SBM) which supports the School to School partnership wherein leader schools mentor low-performing schools. UNICEF Philippines has also funded the construction of community water-supply facilities, school toilets and lavatories, and the promotion of hygiene education and Vitamin A supplementation of schoolchildren in select areas under the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Program.

In addition, other NGOs have undertaken parallel initiatives to benefit the sector. For instance, Simon of Cyrene promoted the use of ramps in schools, Good Neighbors International (Masbate) provided TLE teacher training, Plan International provided Kinder teacher training (Masbate), Lampard Books donated reading materials to different schools, Huawei donated laptops to select schools, Champ Cargo sponsored a construction project in Sorsogon, Child Fund has Child Friendly Learning Spaces as part of their post disaster activities in Pili, Camarines Sur, the Jaycess sponsor yearly distribution of school materials, there is an ongoing school feeding project by Jollibee, a reading program by McDonald's (on their own, but sends report to DepEd), a reading program and teacher training by Synergia, and a reading program, teacher training, school governance strengthening, school building repair and construction, water and sanitation, supplementary school materials by Educo. All of these contribute to improving children's rights in education.

Beyond aid beneficiaries of government and non-government organizations, members of the community should also be regarded as important stakeholders and partners in such endeavors. Project ownership and integrating their views can empower them in contributing to concrete change on the ground.

Recommendations

Ensuring children's enjoyment of their rights requires enjoining all key players to do their share in making this possible. The national government should be held accountable to ensure that budget and necessary plans and programs for education and other children's rights are in place.

At the same time, the local players such as the district offices, local schools, and the LGUs should be held accountable for the effective and efficient implementation of the plans and the utilization of budgets. Local school boards have the role in effectively monitoring and allocating the education budget to ensure that these are properly allocated for the most pressing needs of the schools. NGOs also serve as effective partners of the government in ensuring better delivery of services to children and also in monitoring the utilization of funds to ensure transparency in the utilization of the education budget. These areas for improvement can help direct national and local government as well as civil society in addressing the gaps and enhancing the gains in upholding children's rights to, in, and through education.

General Issues on Education as a Bicolano Child's Right

Advocate for Higher Budget

Continuous advocacy should be conducted by networks of NGOs to make government comply with its constitutional mandate to spend the majority of its budget for the education of its citizens. Right now, the education budget falls below acceptable standards of at least 6 percent of the GDP going to education expenses. The advocacy should not only end in pressing the government to increase budgetary education. NGOs will play a big role in ensuring the transparent and efficient utilization of funds with its active involvement in monitoring on a nationwide and local scale of the utilization of the education budget. Civil society should be able to demand increased efficiency in spending the allocated budget on time.

At the local level, NGOs can make a difference in pursuing training for school administrators and LSBs in raising funds for the needs of local schools. The case of a principal who was able to build several school buildings through her fundraising efforts shows that school administrators can be effective partners of government in addressing shortages of funds in the community. However, principals should be properly trained to do this to ensure they have the skills to raise funds.

Raise Funds for Education

The fundraising and networking capacities (with corporations, local businesses, prominent members of the community, and NGOs) of school administrators, LSBs, and PTAs can be strengthened through resource generation training. This will include proposal writing, budgeting, project planning, and project monitoring. A list of potential donors should also be drawn.

LGUs (C/MSWDO, LCPC, LCE, and other key stakeholders) can be trained on children's rights of a Local Development Plan for Children, a Local Investment Plan for Children, a Local Code for Children and a Local State of Children Report, the implementation of programs for children, and program monitoring and evaluation should also be undertaken.

LGUs must also be engaged to allocate funds from other sources for education other than the SEF for the needs of schools.

LSBs and PTAs can also be trained in project monitoring, especially school-based projects and in the transparent reporting of the utilization of SEF Funds.

Harmonize Programming with Other Organizations

Networking and collaboration with other CSOs should be explored to avoid duplication of services and for resource maximization, best practices and data sharing, and concerted monitoring of the situation of children.

NGOs can also play a big role in the demanding increased transparency and efficiency in the allocation and spending of money by the LSB.

Support Training for Teachers

Further training on the MTB-MLB should be conducted for teachers, specifically on orthography, contextualization, and translation. The translation and production of learning materials especially for the early grades in the local dialect of the communities should be prioritized.

One of the lapses in the MTB-MLB program was that no pre- and post- test monitoring was conducted to assess the improvement of the reading abilities of children or if there was, it was not clear how the information was used to improve teaching and learning. Much of what we encountered was anecdotal information on how children who were made to read

materials in the local language improved. Thus, there is a need to document the gains of the program. However, this should also be balanced out by the documenting of problems to come up with viable solutions in order for the program to work better.

Another area that needs assistance is the production of materials/books in the specific local language of each region. Because Bicol has multiple languages and dialects in different areas, materials, especially for the early grades, should be translated or published in the local tongue to unburden the teachers of the need to translate materials on their own. Translating the materials themselves takes too much valuable time in improving their craft as teachers and becomes an unnecessary burden for them.

Monitoring and evaluating the progress of students in the MTB-MLE is an essential task because of the dearth of research materials on this in the country. Collecting such information could help improve the program and help students improve their academic performance.

The problems of K-12, such as the lack of training of teachers and the lack of equipment of schools offering vocational education, should be immediately addressed through the cooperation of national and local governments and civil society organizations. An inventory of needed equipment for vocational training should be prioritized.

Misconceptions on the K-12 Program must be corrected to ensure enrollment to the Senior High School Program. Additional scholarship funds should also be made available to enable children from poor families to enroll in the private high school of their choice if not accommodated in public schools.

Ensure the Functionality of Key Structures for Children's Rights Protection

The activation and strengthening of important local governance structures will make a big difference in the protection of children's rights in the communities.

First, Local Councils for the Protection of Children (provincial, city/municipal, and barangay) can advocate for the rights of children in local governance and ensure that local development and investment plans for children are all in place in LGUs to ensure that specific programs will address the needs of children: malnutrition, access to schools, high drop-out rates, protection issues, participation issues, etc.

Child Protection Committees (CPC) in schools must ensure that its members are well trained and policies for the protection of children are properly codified. The CPCs should also be trained in the proper protocols in handling cases of abuse of children in and outside schools. Along with this should come the building of referral systems to ensure that the

proper authorities handle cases of abuse (where should cases of sexual and physical abuse be referred to, when is it right to bring the cases to the barangay, DSWD, or police, among other questions). CPCs should also be guided in developing a school-wide code of conduct that reinforces school and community values that clearly define what is unacceptable behavior and their consequences and in conducting abuse, bullying, and corporal punishment prevention activities. The Supreme Student and Pupil Governments can be involved in such an endeavor.

Parents also have a role in claiming the protection rights of their children as with the student whose head was hit by the teacher on the blackboard, who filed a complaint that led to the censure and transfer of the teacher to another school. A parent who asserts the right of his/her children will teach his/her offspring the important lesson of asserting one's rights. Children will have a stake in claiming their rights, if they are encouraged to claim these rights, if they are given a safe environment to express their thoughts, and if they are given the forum to express their opinions (e.g. student government).

Ideally, counseling should be provided for both the bully and the bullied to resolve deep-seated issues causing the problem and the effects of the experience on the bullied student. Ideally, the CPC should manage cases of bullying. Teachers should be trained in handling cases of bullying as well so that they could resolve the issue at the classroom level. Cases should be elevated to the CPC only when mediation within the classroom does not work.

Teachers should also be trained in positive discipline methods to avert the use of corporal punishment on children. Related to this, advocacy for the passage of the Anti-Corporal Punishment Bill should be carried out with utmost priority.

Local School Boards should be transformed from being just a rubber stamp for the SEF budget, into an active board that creates meaningful and appropriate programs for the utilization of the SEF. An active LSB can play a huge role in:

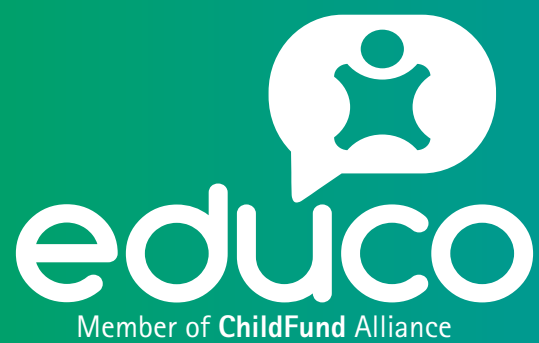
- improving student achievement and quality instruction.
- ensuring accountability in the utilization of the SEF and in the provision of quality education.
- communicating to various stakeholders the goals of education goals of the community.
- using data to come up with appropriate programs for the needs of the students in the community and not just using the SEF for district sports activities.
- aligning and sustaining resources (SEF).

SGCs and PTAs should also be activated. However, PTAs should not just be utilized for the purpose of fundraising or for cleaning of school grounds before the start of classes. PTAs can be mobilized for more impactful purposes such as organizing activities in school like hygiene training, drug abuse prevention volunteering in a tutorial program for slow learners; inviting dentists for dental missions for children; etc. There are limitless projects that the PTA can engage in that will not require a lot of resources or if it does community members can be tapped to assist them in their project. The PTA members can also volunteer as community counselors provided they are given training for this. The SGC, on the other hand, is a good venue for children to learn social responsibility and serves as a good participation venue. It can engage in activities such as peer mentoring, peer counseling, environment-related activities such as recycling drives, formulation solutions to school problems, etc.

Way Forward

Over the last 25 years or so, the government has enacted laws that promote the survival, protection, development, and participation rights of children. These are important because the fulfillment of the right to education is also contingent on the fulfillment of the various rights of children. While the country is credited for its well-developed legal instruments for children's rights and welfare, it falls short in implementing these laws due to the lack of resources, indifferent LGU officials, shortage of trained staff to implement the laws, among other constraints. The national government has also set up necessary local government structures to ensure the protection of children's rights and welfare in local communities. In the Bicol Region, provincial and local governments have passed local legislation promoting children's rights. They have also complied with DILG requirements to create development and local investment plans for children.

Some provinces and cities/municipalities are more advanced in carrying these out. For instance, Naga City has well developed complementary laws and programs that holistically protect children's rights and welfare. It has also established a specific office to oversee children's programming. Other communities, on the other hand, have just complied with minimum requirements of coming up with development and investment plans without ensuring the integration of various programs for children. The consistent and comprehensive implementation of these reforms, at the national and local levels, is essential to the promotion and realization of children's rights to, in, and through education.



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