

The Right to Education Index (RTEI)

Creating positive change in the quality of education in countries and globally.

The [Right to Education Index](#) (RTEI) is a global accountability initiative that aims to ensure that all people, no matter where they live, enjoy their right to a quality education. Built on the framework of the right to education, it monitors country progress, revealing key areas in need of improvement and addressing, on key national-level right to education indicators in the areas of governance and the 4As (Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, and Adaptability) of education.

RTEI findings are to be used to help civil society hold governments accountable to their commitments on the right to education, strengthen networks of education advocates, and increase public and political support to realize the right to education. It is a long-term objective of RTEI to benefit civil society’s efforts to create positive change in the quality of education in countries and globally.

E-Net Philippines

Advocating for the right to education of marginalized, excluded and vulnerable sectors (MEVS).

E-Net Philippines is the RTEI country partner responsible for collecting data on a wide range of indicators explicitly derived from the international right to education framework.

The Civil Society Network for Education Reforms or E-Net Philippines is a national coalition of civil society organizations engaged in policy advocacy and partnerships for education reforms. Since its inception in 2000, at the same time that the Education for All (EFA) movement was revitalized globally, E-Net has been committed to expanding and strengthening civil society participation in reforming the Philippine education system and in developing alternative learning systems with special concern for the marginalized, excluded and vulnerable sectors (MEVS). “Education for All” has been its banner call then, and now, as E-Net endeavors to continue the EFA movement in the light of the new Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) aimed to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

Philippines’ Right to Education Index Score - 2021-2022

The answers to the [RTEI questionnaire](#) were supplied by E-Net Philippines, mainly based on desk review and validated by three global expert reviewers. The country brief was developed based on the inputs of coalition members and education experts.

From the responses and validation made, the Philippines’ over-all Right to Education Index score generated is 83%. This can be ascribed partly to the low scores received for Governance (75%) and Adaptability (76%). For Governance, low scores generated are in the sub-themes of Plan of Action (33%) and Financing (65%). The context of the pandemic mattered in the scores where government programs and plans of action were disrupted and has created significant fiscal policy changes that affected education financing.

For Adaptability, issues surrounding Girls’ Education (56%) will have to be looked deeper into. Also, while the Philippine government mandates free education and is a state party to international treaties and declarations on inclusive education, barriers to learning and participation persist as

PHILIPPINES RTEI SCORE	83%
Governance	75%
International Framework	89%
National Law	88%
Plan of Action	33%
Monitoring and Reporting	100%
Financing	65%
Data Availability	72%
Availability	84%
Classroom	88%
Sanitation	69%
Teachers	92%
Learning Materials	89%
Accessibility	93%
Free Education	100%
Participation	87%
Acceptability	83%
Aims of Education	84%
Learning Environment	67%
Learning Outcomes	99%
Adaptability	76%
Children with Disabilities	83%
Children of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples	89%
Girls	56%
Child Labour	99%
Migrants, Refugees, IDPs, and Children Deprived of Liberty	75%
Armed Conflict	55%
By Indicator Type	
Structural	86%
Process	72%
Outcome	90%

experienced by learners vulnerable to exclusion or marginalization from full and quality educational participation. Children and youth among the poor from rural and urban communities, the malnourished, those with disabilities and children coming from indigenous groups, those affected by disaster and conflict are still being left out.

To date, there is no clear operational policy and program to guide the design and implementation of lifelong learning that covers learning from early childhood to adult education and all modes from formal, non-formal and informal.

Data Availability

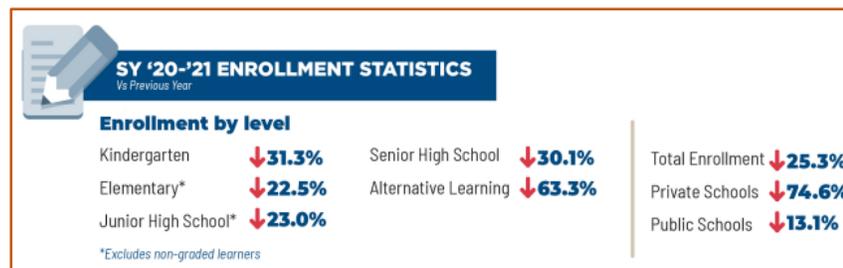
Data comprehensiveness remains an issue in the existing data gathering activities of statistics agencies and departments such as the Philippine Statistics Authority, Department of Education, Health, Social Welfare and Development. In education, data on Out of School Children, Youth and Adults without basic education (OSCYA) are not disaggregated by marginalized sector. These data are especially important not only in tracking the areas where there are large numbers of OSCYA, but on knowing and understanding the different contexts of the OSCYA so as to target appropriate interventions like what education programs, including mode, will best suit their concrete reality or situation.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Right to Education

More Children and Youth Left Behind in Education in Pandemic Time

Aside from its devastating impact on the economy and livelihoods, the COVID-19 pandemic had enormous consequences on education. Schools in basic and higher education were forced to close in early March 2020 when the first lockdown was enforced.

Basic public schools numbering 47,013 suspended classes disrupting the lives of more than 27 million students. School Year (SY) 2020-2021 was moved from June to October with 1.5 million children and youth left behind as their parents lost their jobs or became unemployed.



DepEd data showed that there were 26.2 million enrollees compared to 27.7 million before the pandemic¹. In the statistics provided by the Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department, enrollment went down across all levels.

To limit the disruption of education, schools and higher education institutions (HEIs) adopted a shift to blended and distance learning. The immediate effects on learners, teachers and parents have been in the adjustment to the new learning mode. However, a major issue challenging the effective implementation of this multi-modal learning approach, up to SY 2021-2022, is equity in terms of learners' access to technology and gadgets. Another major issue is the availability of and capacity for providing learning support at home, and physical availability of parents/learning facilitators who may be daily wage earners and need to be at work. This situation renders more difficult the attainment of inclusive and equitable quality education.

Critical Education Issues

① *Girls' Education*

¹ <https://mb.com.ph/2021/08/31/a-new-school-year-starts-in-millions-of-homes-again-2/>

Data culled from the Department of Education and Philippine Statistics Authority consistently show that females perform better than males in nearly all key education indicators. Participation rate is higher among females and they tend to survive longer in school compared to males of the same age bracket. In the 2019 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) Final Report, about half (53.4%) of Filipinos in the age group 10 to 64 years old had a literacy level four, or those who have completed at least four years of secondary education (that is, at least junior high school completer/high school graduate), and most of them were females. There were more female college graduates or higher (13.8%) than male (9.9%) in 2019.

Notwithstanding these accomplishments, females continue to be discriminated in and outside school. It must be stressed that gender equality in education is not simply a question of parity measured by the number of girls relative to the number of boys in school. Persisting discrimination is manifested in the reasons for dropping out of school, in gender stereotyping in school, and in education outcome. Studies show that housekeeping chores, including taking care of younger siblings, are mainly the responsibility of girls and young women. It is a big factor causing dropouts among females. Discrimination is also manifested in the significant number of females dropping out and eventually quitting school due to pregnancy and early marriage. There are social stigmas associated with early pregnancy – pregnant young women become embarrassed to attend school and after childbirth, they mainly drop out to take care of their children, often due to limited access to affordable childcare.

② Out-of-School Children, Youth and Adults (OSCYA)

In the Philippines, there is a still large number of Out-of-School Children, Youth and Adults who have yet to claim their right to basic education. In the 2019 FLEMMS Final Report, among the estimated 57.7 million Filipinos 3 to 30 years old, 43% or an estimated 24.8 million were not attending school in 2019. Most of these persons not attending school were already employed/looking for work (36.6%). Moreover, the population aged 3 to 30 years old who did not attend school due to marriage or because they were already taking care of children, was estimated to be 3.3 million in 2019. Among age groups, the population aged 5 to 17 years old who did not attend school in 2019 was approximately 1.5 million.

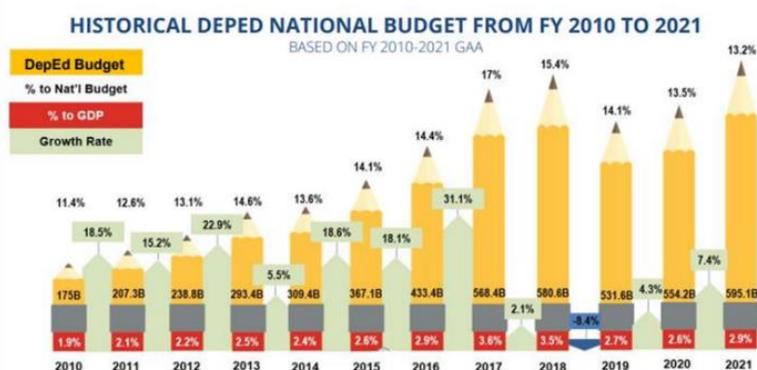
About **two in every five** 3 to 30 years old who are not attending school in 2019 reported employment/ looking for work as their primary reason for not attending school. (2019 FLEMMS Report)

Although public basic and secondary education is free, many children still cannot avail themselves of education. Even the amount of some of the normal costs involved in schooling such as transportation, supplies, and daily allowance may be too much for poor families to shoulder especially if there are more than two children in school. By the time these children reach high school, the additional cost of transportation, meals and supplies constitute a substantial portion of the family's daily budget. This is a major reason children drop out of school. The higher cost of tertiary education partly explains the relatively small number of students reaching college level.

Malnutrition also leads to poor attendance and performance in school and to shorter attention spans. The poor comprise the largest group at risk of or already suffering from nutritional deficiencies and food insecurity. Poor nutrition has been identified as a leading reason children drop out of school particularly during the first three grades of formal education.

The likelihood of being out-of-school tends to be highest among rural-based children and youth, children and youth from urban poor households, child laborers, children and youth with disabilities, children and youth in conflict situations and disaster-stricken areas, Muslims, and Indigenous peoples.

③ Education Financing



There have been significant increases in the basic education budget especially in the last five years. However, spending remains low compared to the requirements of quality and inclusive education. Within Asia-Pacific, the Philippines is among the lowest spenders in education. Government spending on education is still below the global benchmarks of 4%-6% of GDP and 15%-20% of the national budget.

Studies noted the consistently declining quality due to underinvestment in education. As stated in a recent OECD publication², expenditure per student in the Philippines was the lowest amongst all Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)-participating countries/economies – and 90% lower than the OECD average. This lack of investment in education impacts the quality of education. Out of the 79 countries that participated in the 2018 PISA, the Philippines ranked 78th in reading and 77th in science and mathematics. In the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), Philippines' performance was poor with only 10% of Grade 5 pupils meeting the minimum reading standards and only 17% of Grade 5 pupils meeting the minimum math standards.

Decades of underfunding has created the persisting problem of shortages in resources such as classrooms and school buildings, teachers, textbooks and learning materials, chairs, etc. While the present DepEd leadership has reduced the huge backlog they inherited, it will take years of catching up and sufficiently allocating funding to address the backlogs. From the report of the Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department in 2021, resource gaps stand at 42,493 classrooms, 32,336 teacher items, 9,631,402 textbooks, 494,457 chairs and 1,917 ICT packages.

As the government scrambled to respond to the health and socioeconomic crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, budgets for education have been slashed to fund emergency and medical response. For SY 2020-2021, it failed to allocate sufficient funds to smooth the transition of all schools and universities to blended, distance or remote learning. Many of the realigned funds were meant to support the requirements of the Learning Continuity Plan and the marginalized learners and disadvantaged communities including budget for the Special Education Program and School-based Feeding Program.

For 2022, the Inclusive Education Program decreased by 8.8% or a budget of P15.9 billion as compared with P17.4 billion in 2021. In particular, allocation for the Indigenous Peoples Education Program was substantially reduced by 67.6% from P159.1 million in 2021 to P51.5 million in 2022. Allocation for Flexible Learning Options declined by 8.4% from P16.6 billion in 2021 to P15.2 billion in 2022.

Recommendations

Data Availability

Data collection and analysis must be improved from school-district-provincial-regional-national and mechanisms for data/information sharing among national government agencies and institutions especially those who work with and address the needs of marginalized groups must be in place. Provide for transparency of all budget-related data especially relevant to ensuring inclusive education.

² https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_PHL.pdf

Research on multiple barriers for not attending school is needed so that they can be effectively targeted with interventions. Use the data and research for informed policy making, including increased investment. Make the data publicly available and accessible.

Girls' Education

Promote and implement continuation of age-appropriate education and/or training on sexual and reproductive health rights.

Develop and implement approaches with key stakeholders at various levels to combat stigma and discrimination associated with early and unintended pregnancy and adolescent motherhood.

Develop and offer flexible learning modalities for young parents to facilitate their participation in education and training; facilitate virtual peer groups (in WhatsApp, Facebook, etc.) to connect young parents to peers to promote mentoring and support and ensure youth are not isolated in remote learning environments. Provide affordable or free childminding services. Provide financial support for teen-age mothers in the form of complementary food (for babies ready to be weaned), diapers, and other basic needs of babies.

Out-of-School Children, Youth and Adults (OSCYA)

Target interventions to reach the most marginalized children, youth and adults who are out of school today, including People with disabilities, from indigenous communities, and those affected by natural disasters and armed conflict. These interventions need to be able to break down the barriers that make education out of reach for many.

Continue to expand public provision of school infrastructure and investment in terms of coverage and quality improvement targeted at areas where need is greatest – rural areas and urban slums. Prioritize retraining of teachers so that critical thinking in the classroom is promoted rather than simply knowing facts and data. Establish community-based learning centers, so that distance and transportation requirements do not prevent children and youth from attending school and offer allowance support that can help poor pupils and students overcome the financial barriers to their education.

Alternative Learning System (ALS) and Flexible Learning Options

Expand and intensify delivery of Alternative Learning System (ALS) that is appropriate to age levels and responds to the different contexts of learners. Increase per capita budget per ALS learner. Encourage the adoption of flexible learning modalities, such as those instituted during the COVID-19 pandemic, within Department of Education ALS, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and State Universities and Colleges to allow for learning-while-earning opportunities.

Education Financing

Ensure adequate investment in resources that would provide targeted support for the marginalized, excluded and vulnerable sectors and quality education for all. Feeding programs for 0-4 should be considered as part of education-related budget. Also, there should be increase in investment in day care centers as places where children are being prepared for formal basic education. These resources need to be used effectively and efficiently toward the strengthening of governance and accountability systems.

Identify and earmark sufficient budget for inclusive education at all levels (i.e., pre-primary to secondary levels) through the adoption of a more coordinated approach that would fulfill the diverse learning needs of the marginalized groups. The Incheon Declaration urged countries to comply with benchmarks for domestic funding of education (4%–6% of GDP and/or at least 15 –20% of public expenditure).