

### Mapping Out Disadvantaged Groups in Education



## About Asia South Pacific Education Watch Initiative

The critical state and ailing condition of education in many countries in Asia-South Pacific region compels serious and urgent attention from all education stakeholders.

Centuries of neglect, underinvestment in education, corruption, and inefficiency by successive governments in the countries of the region have left a grim toll in poor education performance marked by low school attendance and survival rates, high dropout and illiteracy rates, and substandard education quality.

Moreover, there are glaring disparities in access to education and learning opportunities: hundreds of millions of impoverished and disadvantaged groups which include out-of-school children and youth, child workers, children in conflict areas, women, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, dalit caste and other socially discriminated sectors, remain largely unreached and excluded by the education system.

Hence they are denied their fundamental human right to education and hindered from availing of the empowering and transformative tool of quality, life-long learning that could have equipped them to realize their full human potential, uplift their living conditions, and participate meaningfully in governance and in decisions that affect their lives.

### At Midway: Failing Grade in EFA

In the year 2000, governments and the international community affirmed their commitment to quality Education for All (EFA) and Millenium Development Goals (MDGs). Midway to target year 2015, government assessments of EFA progress reveal that education gaps and disparities persist, and education conditions may even be worsening as indicated by shortfalls and reversals in EFA achievement.

The landmark year 2007 therefore presents a timely opportunity for civil society networks to engage governments in addressing the unmet EFA goals and MDG education targets, especially for disadvantaged groups.

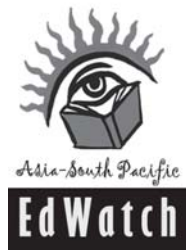
### Real World Strategies

Spurred by the challenge of pushing for accelerated progress towards EFA, the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) launched the Real World Strategies (RWS) programme to undertake realistic and practical initiatives based on the actual conditions, experiences, and aspirations of people in communities.

*(Continued on inside back cover)*

Philippines: Summary Report

# **Mapping Out Disadvantaged Groups in Education**



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Philippines: Summary Report

Mapping Out Disadvantaged Groups in Education

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**The Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education**

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# Philippines: Summary Report

## Mapping Out Disadvantaged Groups in Education

Public education in the Philippines has been deteriorating since the 1980s. The country has had six Secretaries of the Department of Education (DepEd) since the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, and all of them have introduced initiatives to reverse the decline. The interventions focused mostly on the schools, with marginal results. Little attention went to the learning needs of almost one-third of the school-age population who are not in school, and to adults denied basic education.

### A. Education Watch Initiative

The Civil Society Network for Education Reforms (E-Net Philippines), a network of organizations pushing for Education for All, believes that years of underinvestment and neglect of the public education system have caused the country's dismal education performance. This critique provided a framework for engaging with DepEd and the Legislature, specifically in lobbying for increased investments for education targeting the marginalized, excluded and vulnerable groups. But it did not apply to principals, teachers and civil society organizations already implementing and innovating education programmes on the ground. There was also a need to formulate an approach toward local government (LGU) officials responsible for the needs of those who are missing out on education. E-Net Philippines realized the importance of generating updated data at the *barangay* (village) and municipal (town) levels and scrutinizing the reasons many children and youth are not in school.

The need for updated data to guide national and local advocacy gave birth to Education Watch, a collaboration between Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and E-Net Philippines, to map out the disadvantaged sectors in education. Conceptualized in

March 2006, Education Watch culminated in a public launch in September 2007. It is a citizen-based assessment at the midpoint of the Education for All campaign in the Philippines seeking to establish baseline data, determine the magnitude of education deficits, analyze the underlying causes of deprivation, monitor changes over time, and identify factors that can account for changes in the education performance until 2015. It is designed to inform policy, formulate well-targeted programs and identify and locate beneficiaries to effectively reach out to children missing out on education.

The study was undertaken at three levels:

- 1) National Monitoring. The monitoring compiled available data to assess the magnitude of the education gaps at the national level. Data at this level came from official censuses, surveys and administrative reports of various national agencies.
- 2) Local Area Surveys. The surveys generated village and town level data on key education indicators. Four areas were selected purposively based on geographic location, the presence of partners in the local areas and the cooperation of the local government units. The areas covered by the survey were located in the highly urbanised Quezon City and in three provinces where agriculture is the major economic activity: Negros Occidental, Northern Samar, and Benguet. These local surveys aimed to get a snapshot of the local education situation and substantiate the education trends at the national level.

*Education Watch  
Enumerators'  
Training Workshop  
conducted in  
Toboso, Negros  
Occidental on 26  
April 2006 in  
preparation for the  
local survey  
covering four  
barangays of the  
municipality*





3. Case Studies. Four case studies were done on marginalised sectors: two on indigenous peoples in Pampanga and South Cotabato provinces, one on child laborers in sugarcane plantations and one on the plight of children in armed conflict areas in Maguindanao.

## B. Key Findings of the Study

### I. Gaps and Reversals in Basic Education

E-Net Philippines' local Education Watch survey showed that 81.1% of children 6 to 11 years old were attending primary school while only 55.8% of children 12 to 15 years old were attending high school (See Table 1). This indicates that a huge number of children were either out of school or were in levels not corresponding to their ages. In the Philippines, the officially prescribed school age is 6 to 11 years old for primary level and 12 to 15 for secondary level.

The study found that some 60% of students lagged by one to two years while another 12% were behind their school levels by at least three years. Some 11.2% of children 6 to 11 years old were still in pre-school; 35.4% of children 12 to 15 years old were still in elementary; and 52.5% among the 16- to 19-year-old age group were still in high school while 3% were still in the elementary level.

The study also noted that a significant number of children were

Education Watch Local Survey Key Indicators	
Participation Rate (Primary)	81.1%
Gross Enrolment Rate (Primary)	101.3%
Participation Rate (Secondary)	55.8%
Gross Enrolment Rate (Secondary)	83.7%
ECE Attendance Rate (3-5 yrs. old)	29.7%
School Age Population (6-24 yrs. old)	
Attending School	72.3%
Not Attending School	27.7%
Educational Attainment (6 yrs. Up)	
No Grade Completed	4.4%
Primary Level	40.3%
Secondary Level	36.3%
Tertiary Level or Higher	19.3%
Mean Duration of Schooling	7.3 Yrs.

*Table 1. Enrolment rates in various levels based on Education Watch's Local Area Survey*

already late in starting school. These are children over 6 years old who have not started primary school. Late entrants are usually at risk. Many never make it to school or drop out early to work to help in the family's livelihood or when they reach puberty and are ridiculed in school. The dropout rate among late entrants tends to be higher than among children who started schooling on time.

Participation in early childhood education (ECE) is low in areas covered by the survey. Only about 30 percent of the children 3 to 5 years old were attending pre-school. The study noted that day care centers were far from some *barangays* surveyed; other *barangays* had no access to day care centers at all.

A huge number of school-age children and youth do not attend school. Survey data reported that 27.7% of the 36,187 surveyed population 6 to 24 years old were not attending school. The proportion of males not in school is higher at 30% than their female counterparts at 26%. The survey data also showed that attendance in school decreases with age. Some 6.7% of children 6 to 11 years old were not attending school; 11.4% among the 12 to 15 years old were out of school; and 43.3% among the 16 to 19 years old were out of school.

The survey data also revealed that the average duration of schooling among those 6 years old and older was 7.3 years. Some 4.4% had not gone to school; 40.3% had at most elementary education; 36.0% reached high school; and 19.3% reached tertiary level.

**Education trends at the national level.** The findings of the local survey are validated by official data culled from the DepEd which reported a consistent decline in the country's education performance over the past several years. The elementary participation rate went down to 84.4% in SY 2005-2006 from 90.1 percent in SY 2001-2002.[1] Meanwhile, dropout rates remain alarmingly high, posting record levels in both primary (10.57%) and secondary levels (15.81%). The increasing fallout of children from the school system explains the low survival and completion rates, and indicates the weak holding capacity of the public school system.

The huge number of the out-of-school children and youth highlights the deteriorating state of basic education in the Philippines (See Table 2). For 2003, the National Statistics Office (NSO) reported that of the 34.2 million Filipinos 6 to 24 years old, 11.6 million were not attending school. This means that one in every three school-age Filipinos is out-of-school. The Bureau of Alternative Learning System

National Education Indicators		
Performance Statistics (SY2005-06)	Primary	Secondary
Participation Rate	84.4%	58.2%
Gross Enrolment Rate	101.1%	80.8%
Cohort Survival Rate	58.4%	59.1%
Completion Rate	56.7%	54.1%
Dropout	10.6%	15.8%
ECE Attendance Rate (3-5 years Old)	34.0%	
Median Duration of Schooling	6.2 Years	
School Age Population (6-24 years old)	34.2 million	
Out-of-School	11.6 million	
6-11 Age Group	1.84 million	
12-15 Age Group	3.94 million	
Illiteracy Rate (10-64 years old)		
Completely Illiterate	5.2 million	
Not Functionally Literate	9.6 million	
Not Fully Literate	19.7 million	
Number of Child Workers	4.0 million	
Number of Street Children	1.5 million	
Malnourished School Children	2.49 million	

(BALS-DepEd) updated these estimates for 2006 and placed the number of those not attending school at 1.84 million for the 6 to 11 age group and another 3.94 million for the 12 to 15 age group.[2] Given these figures, the Philippines has one of the biggest numbers of out-of-school children in Southeast Asia, higher even than Vietnam and Indonesia in both absolute number and relative terms.[3]

The Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) conducted in 2003 further noted that one out of ten Filipinos 10 to 64 years old was completely illiterate. That means 5.2 million Filipinos cannot read and write simple words or sentences in any language. The same survey also noted that 84.1% of Filipinos were functionally literate. This means that one in six Filipinos or 9.6 million were not functionally literate. More disturbing is that one in three Filipinos was not fully literate. These are persons who are able to read and write but who cannot comprehend a full paragraph consisting of a few sentences.

Between 1994 and 2003, official survey reports noted a slight improvement in the educational attainment of the working population 15 years and above. This is reflected in the higher percentage of those

*Table 2. Education performance statistics and estimated population count of disadvantaged children*

*Sources: Department of Education (DepED); Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI); and National Statistics Office (NSO)*



reaching tertiary and higher levels of education in 2003 compared to the previous survey years. Nonetheless, the improvement is too marginal and not commensurate to the reported increases in enrolment over the same period. Even worse is the fact that literacy levels of Filipinos did not improve at all during the same period.

The FLEMMS 2003 reported some more alarming findings about the quality of education Filipino children get. Nearly 6% of elementary graduates could not read and write, and only 81.6% among them were functionally literate or could read, write and compute. Even worse, less than half or 45.3% were fully literate. Even among those who have had some high school education, 89.5% were functionally literate and only 57.6% of them were fully literate. These figures show the poor outcome of basic education in the Philippines: children either drop out before functional literacy is achieved or continue schooling without learning enough. The survey results clearly indicate that while Filipinos are getting more schooled, they have become less literate.

**The data culled from the local survey and from national government statistics show that the Philippines is missing its Education for All targets. In fact, the government's midterm progress report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) noted that Goal No.2 on universal primary education, along with Goal No.5 on Maternal Health, have become the most threatened among the eight goals.**

*Poor road conditions affect the delivery of educational services in upland areas of the Philippines, where teachers usually report for work only three times a week. Remote communities are hardship posts for teachers, and they ask to be reassigned to town centers after two years of duty, leaving many upland schools without teachers. This photo was taken in a remote village in Benguet in Northern Luzon.*





## 2. Persisting Disparities

Local survey data reflect wide disparities in education performance and achievement across geographic areas and economic status. Table 3 shows a gap between rural and urban areas in terms of educational attainment of the household population. A higher percentage of the rural population or 56.4% had at most an elementary level education. Similarly, more of the urban dwellers had reached tertiary level education compared to those in rural areas. Among the surveyed areas, the poor and remote municipalities of Toboso, Capul and Rosario in Negros Occidental registered the lowest educational attainment. In contrast, the relatively affluent municipality of La Trinidad had the highest percentage of residents who had gone to college.

The disparity in educational attainment is also manifested in the shorter duration of schooling among the rural population. The survey results noted that urban dwellers tend to stay longer in school compared to those residing in rural areas. The rural *barangays* of Toboso town and Samar province had the lowest mean years of schooling.

The study also noted that a slightly larger proportion of the school-age population in rural areas was not attending school. Rural residents were also more at risk of dropping out of school, with a higher percentage among them starting school late and a significant number over-age by at least three years.

Disparity is also noted in preschool attendance rates. The relatively affluent areas of La Trinidad, Benguet and Quezon City showed that more children 3 to 5 years old were attending preschool compared to those children in the more remote municipalities of Toboso, Rosario and Capul.

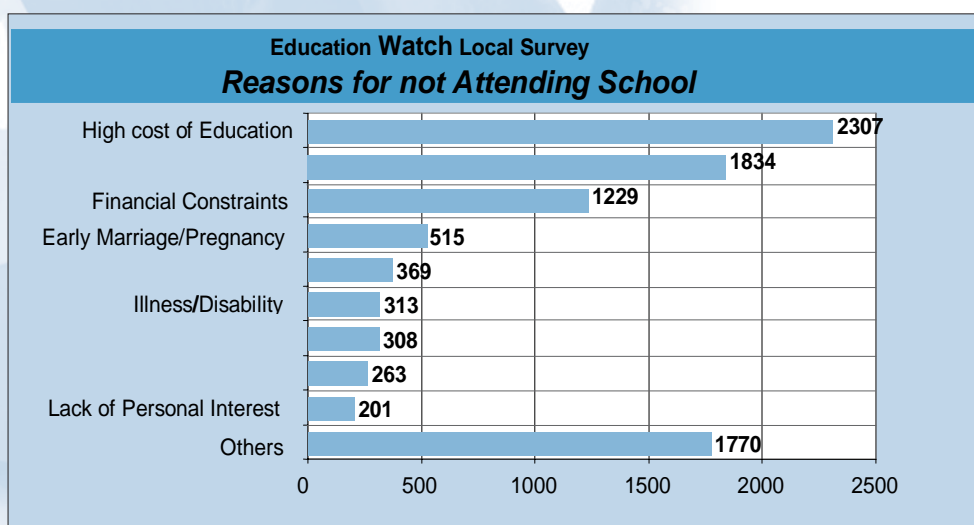
Education Watch Local Survey Disparities by Area and Wealth Status				
	Area Location		Wealth Status	
	Urban	Rural	Richest 20%	Poorest 20%
<u>School Age Population (6-24 yrs old)</u>				
Attending School	73.9%	70.0%	79.5%	67.2%
Not Attending School	26.1%	30.0%	20.5%	32.8%
<u>Educational Attainment (6 yrs. up)</u>				
No Grade Completed	3.8%	5.3%	2.5%	7.3%
Primary Level	32.8%	51.1%	27.9%	50.8%
Secondary Level	40.0%	30.2%	39.6%	34.3%
Tertiary Level or Higher	23.4%	13.4%	30.1%	7.6%
Mean Duration of Schooling	8.0 Yrs.	6.6 Yrs.	7.5 Yrs.	6.0 Yrs.

*Table 3. Local survey data reflecting disparities in education performance and achievement across geographic areas and economic status*

Poverty is weighing down heavily on the education of Filipino children. Survey informants revealed that the main reasons children were dropping out or not attending school were economic and poverty-related, as seen in Figure 1. Over half mentioned the high cost of education, financial constraints and seeking of employment as the main reason for dropping out of school. Some respondents (2.9%) mentioned accessibility factors such as distance and lack of transportation. These respondents live in remote and isolated areas where the poverty incidence is usually high. It is also significant that a higher percentage of those who mentioned housekeeping chores, difficulty in coping with school work and illness or disability belonged to the poorer section of the population.

The survey documented the incidence of child labor with a number of children as young as 8 to 12 years old having to drop out of school to look for jobs and to work. Children are also being pulled out of school to attend to housekeeping chores and to help in the farms and the family's livelihood.

The study identified disadvantaged groups among the household population covered by the survey. They consist of the out-of-school children, 6 to 17 years old; the youth, 18 to 24 years old who had at most elementary education; and the illiterate and poorly educated adults, 25 to 64 years old. In the survey areas, the disadvantaged children and youth total 4,215 or 11.54% of the relevant age group, while the disadvantaged adults are estimated at 11,000 or 32.22% of the population 25 to 64 years old.



*Figure 1. Reasons given by respondents for dropping out or for not attending school*

The disadvantaged groups cut across gender and geographic areas. They are found in all *barangays* covered by the survey. Nonetheless, the survey yielded significant disparities. A higher proportion of disadvantaged children and youth were found in rural communities, many in areas without access to electricity, without sanitary toilet facilities and where safe drinking water has to be fetched 250 meters from where they live.



***Chances of returning to school.*** Survey respondents aged 6 to 24 who dropped out of school, were asked if they have plans of going back to school. Positive responses were inversely proportional to age. The longer the time spent away from school, the more difficult it is for the children to return to school.

In the surveyed area, 22.5% of those not attending school among children and youth aged 6 to 24 have been away from school for only a period of at most two years. A proactive intervention requires immediate identification to enable educators to reach out to these children and youth. Intervention programs should consider the length of time the students have been away from school. The approach to those who have left school for a shorter time may differ from those who have been away from school for several years already.

The survey also inquired into attendance in training programs. Survey data reveal that participation rate in existing training programs is low: only 10 % of those aged 10 to 64 years old attended training, mostly on livelihood. This is similar to the findings of a national survey (FLEMMS 2003), which noted that only 9% of respondents aged 10 to 64 years took part in a training program, also mostly related to livelihood. Only a small number had any training in literacy, livelihood, skills development and other learning endeavors. Only very few from the poorest segments of the population attended such trainings.

***Disparity trends at the national level.*** Again, the findings of the local survey are supported by available data culled from government national surveys and administrative agencies.



The huge number of the out-of-school children particularly among the poor, the malnourished, those with disabilities and children coming from ethnic minority groups highlights the persisting inequities in access to basic education. The FLEMMS 2003 reported the high incidence of out-of-school youth in the depressed regions of Mindanao and the Visayas, as well as in the thickly populated regions of Luzon, specifically the National Capital Region, Calabarzon and Central Luzon. Similarly, the 2003 Nutrition Survey reported that some 2.49 million school children 6 to 10 years old were underweight. The same survey also revealed that 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. Moreover, poor nutrition is often associated with poor performance in school.

The incidence of disability is likewise high among school-age children. Disability is a major factor depriving children of access to education even if guarantees exist on the right of the disabled child to special care, education and training. The 2000 census reported that, nationwide, there were 845,676 disabled people. A little less than half of them or 44.38% achieved elementary level of education while 23.56% have never attended formal education. The educational attainment of persons with disabilities is consistently lower compared to the achievement level of the average Filipino.

Literacy status also reflects similar disparities across regions and across income groups. In general, higher incidence of illiteracy is noted among the poor and in high poverty areas across the country.

Poverty forces children to leave and stay out of school to work, look for jobs and help in the family livelihood. The National Statistics Office revealed that in 2001, there were more than four million working children aged 5 to 17 years old. Majority of them





(70%) were residing in the rural areas numbering 2.8 million. Large populations of working children were found in highly populated regions and in depressed areas of the country.[4]

Of the more than four million working children in the country, 2.65 million were attending school while 1.26 million were not. That means one out of three working children was not attending school. Working male children are two times more likely to drop out compared to working females. The physical and mental strain of working exacts a heavy toll on those who continue to study. Some 44.8% of the young working students admitted that they had difficulty doing both at the same time. The most common problems encountered were difficulty in catching-up with the lessons, low grades, absenteeism and tardiness.[5]

Street children, on the other hand, are one of the most visible victims of exclusion. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) estimates a total of 222,417 street children in 65 major cities in the country (1998), most of them not attending school.[6]

It is also important to note that parents' education impacts significantly on school attendance of their children.

Persisting disparities in education access and outcome reflect the prevailing inequities in Philippine society. The poor and the disadvantaged are still being left out, thus, threatening the achievement of the Education for All (EFA) goals.

### 3. The Gender Dimension

Data culled from the Education Watch local survey, from official national surveys and from the Department of Education 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. More males drop out of school and more of the male children are working.

Females tend to be more literate and stay longer in school compared to males. More women had attended college and higher education (20.4%) and fewer women had no formal education (7.2%). In comparison, males tended to have shorter duration of schooling while only 17.9% had attended college and higher education and 8% have had no formal schooling.

Females performed better than males in both urban and rural areas and in all the regions of the country including Muslim Mindanao. These

Gender Disparities in Education		
	Male	Female
<u>School Age Population (6-24 yearr old)<sup>1</sup></u>		
Attending School	70.32%	74.33%
Not Attending School	29.68%	25.67%
<u>Performance Statistics in Primary Education (Public Schools, SY2005-06)<sup>2</sup></u>		
Participation Rate	72.87%	74.17%
Gross Enrolment Rate	89.84%	87.81%
Cohort Survival Rate	58.20%	67.51%
Completion Rate	56.35%	66.37%
Dropout Rate	1.73%	0.96%
<u>Educational Attainment (6 years. up)<sup>3</sup></u>		
No Grade Completed	9.40%	8.60%
Primary Level	41.40%	38.70%
Secondary Level	31.30%	32.30%
Tertiary Level or Higher	14.80%	17.90%
Mean Duration of Schooling <sup>1</sup>	7.1 Years	7.6 Year
Disadvantaged Children and Youth <sup>1</sup>	65.00%	35.00%
Percent of Out of School among Primary School Aged Children <sup>4</sup>	19.30%	16.90%

<sup>1</sup> Education Watch Local Survey

<sup>2</sup> Department of Education (DepEd)

<sup>3</sup> National Statistics Office (NSO)

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS)

*Table 4. Data from various sources showing females performing better than males based on key education indicators*

findings are fairly consistent across years as seen in Table 4 which shows data from national surveys conducted in the last 15 years.

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. In this study, persisting discrimination is manifested in the reasons for dropping out of school, in gender stereotyping in school, and in education outcome.

Both the local and national surveys showed that housekeeping chores, including taking care of younger siblings, are mainly the responsibility of girls and young women. It is the second biggest factor causing dropouts among females, while it is hardly a factor among males. Discrimination is also manifested in the significant number of females dropping out and eventually quitting school due to pregnancy and early marriage.

On the other hand, more males dropped out of school due to employment-related concerns. It is significant to note that gender differences in education accomplishment is influenced by economic and employment factors. More males among the poor section of the population are more likely to be pulled out of school to earn a living and help in the family's livelihood.

It is important to scrutinize the Philippines' gender parity in education. According to Quisumbing, "In the Philippines, parents may be investing more in women's education as women's non-farm work opportunities have expanded and women experience an increase in wages." [7] Indeed, this insight is substantiated by the increase through time of women working abroad. Kanlungan, a non-government organization working on migrant issues, says 73% of the overseas contract workers from the Philippines are women involved in domestic work, entertainment and the hotel industry. In Mindanao, teachers say that girls who are not even 18 years old get recruited to work in the Middle East as helpers. Thus, the necessity for girls to be educated — they at least have to be able to read, write, compute and communicate in English.

On the domestic labor market, women's labor force participation rate (LFPR) still lags behind men's. In the October 2002 Labor Force Survey, women's LFPR was 51.7% while men's was 80.8%. There could be two explanations for this: The education and high performance of girls in schools do not necessarily prepare them for the rigors of work, and women are still discriminated in the hiring process. The kind of work being offered Filipinas abroad and the lack of opportunities for women in the domestic market put to test the gender equality dimensions of the rights-based framework of Philippine education.

#### 4. Socio-Political Inequities Create Disparities in Education

Economic hardship is but one dimension in the lives of people in marginal communities where E-Net Philippines made its case studies. Other socio-political situations that impinge on education access and quality are:

- The absence of proactive efforts to reach out to indigenous groups coupled with a lack of recognition of diverse multicultural indigenous knowledge systems and prevalence of a standardised curriculum, thereby depriving indigenous children and adults of relevant quality education;
- School policies that further marginalise cash-strapped marginal



- communities, and school governance lacking rigor;
- Traditions and cultural beliefs and practices that favor men, making women and children the most vulnerable groups;
- Access to services highly affected by patronage and dependent on goodwill;
- The exclusion of marginalised groups from decision-making processes that affect their lives and failure to provide them with necessary information to empower them to demand education for their children; and
- Armed conflict and community conflicts in the form of feuds between clans resulting in dislocation, thus affecting access to education.

***The Case of the Indigenous Peoples.*** The indigenous peoples (IPs) represent a significant section of the population who are disadvantaged partly because they live in remote, isolated and upland communities where access to schools and basic services are limited and difficult. Indigenous peoples retain their own culture, customs and traditions and are often discriminated against and abused. They face the constant threat of losing their land even as they contend with inadequate social support. There are about 12 million indigenous peoples, of which 2.5 million are children 6 to 15 years old. Most of them are found in the upland communities of Mindanao and Central and Northern Luzon, particularly in areas with high poverty incidence and low education performance. The 2000 Census reported a much lower literacy level (70%) among IPs compared to the national average. IP children are disadvantaged with lower educational attainment, lower enrolment rates and higher school dropout rates.

The T'boli, Ayta and Muslims consider it important for children to learn to read, write and count, and to study more about their culture, values and system of self-governance. But parents hesitate to send their children to school because of the western and materialistic orientation of the school system. Schools hardly integrate indigenous knowledge and the discussion of local stories,







*Many Filipino indigenous people do not have access to education. Those who do have difficulty adjusting to the national school system which does not integrate indigenous culture and language into the curriculum. This photo shows the Ayta respondents to Participatory Action Research conducted in Pampanga by the Popular Education for People's Empowerment*

beliefs and customs into the standardized curriculum implemented throughout the country. The same lesson plans and textbooks are used and no indigenous learning materials are developed and made available to the learners. Many educators and those interviewed recommend skewing the public education curriculum closer to the needs of the students and the community as a whole.

A related limitation is the lack of local teachers competent enough to handle multicultural teaching approaches. Most of those deployed in remote areas are the new and inexperienced teachers who are unfamiliar with indigenous culture and life ways. They tend to be biased and to treat children from indigenous communities as inferior. Parents complain that their children tend to be ashamed of their identity and look down on themselves and their parents as inadequate.

Parents also complain about the frequent absences and tardiness of teachers who usually report for work only three days instead of the regular five days a week. Teachers, on the other hand, complain about being away from their families, the low salary they receive and the difficulty of traveling through unsafe roads without adequate transportation. These teachers usually ask to be transferred to schools conveniently located in or near town centers, after two or three years' assignment in remote indigenous communities.



The use of the national language as the medium of instruction makes learning more difficult for indigenous children. Teachers usually do not speak the local language and are unable to explain lessons to most students who are used to thinking through concepts in their own language. The language barrier thus prevents students from communicating and performing confidently in schools.

The study covered an indigenous community in Lake Sebu, Central Mindanao, which practices the tradition of early marriage, forcing young boys and girls to quit school at an early stage. Parents arrange marriages for their children, especially daughters who could fetch sizable dowries from wealthy prospective husbands, if negotiations go well. Some parents consider this a way out of their responsibility of bringing up daughters, who are allowed to live with their betrothed partners as early as when they turn eight years old.

Many indigenous communities are also conflict areas where the lives and education of children are severely affected. In southern Philippines and Muslim Mindanao, the continuing armed conflict has displaced tens of thousands of Filipinos, many of them poor children from remote and upland communities. Armed conflict forces entire communities to evacuate, disrupting livelihood, community life and school activities. Children stay out of school for extended periods and many are forced to quit, given the unstable situation, the closure of schools, and the distance of schools from resettlement sites. Conflicts that are rooted in inter-ethnic biases and prejudices lead to discrimination and fear. Government policies worsen such inequities, which further marginalise groups along ethnic and religious lines.

## 5. Education Financing

The Philippines has been under-spending in basic education. In 1997, national expenditure on basic education was about 3.2% of GDP, compared to 2.5% in 2001 and 2.1% in 2005. Similarly, per capita expenditure on basic education in real terms declined from P374 in 1997 to P339 in 2001 and to P282 by 2005 based on 1985 prices.[8] Similarly, DepEd's share in the national budget has been shrinking from 15.96% in 1998 to only 11.55% in 2006.<sup>9</sup> These figures are way off the international benchmark set by the UNESCO-Delors Commission which recommended that education expenditure should be at least 6% of GNP. This is particularly worrisome because it will take a long time to catch up after under-investing for too long in education.

Notwithstanding the constitutional guarantee of free and compulsory basic education, the survey results show that education is not free.

Table 5 shows that education is a major expense for Filipino households. Apart from tuition fees, families also spend for textbooks, school supplies, uniforms and school clothes, sports fees, and other school-related fees and expenses.

While technically no tuition fee is collected, payment comes in various forms and passes off as voluntary contributions. This explains why many respondents claim to have paid tuition fees even though their children were actually enrolled in public schools.

Expenditure varies significantly across areas and by type of schools, by level and by income group. As expected, the cost of private education is significantly higher than state-provided education.

<b>Education Watch Local Survey</b> <b>Average Annual per Student Cost of Education</b> <b>by Level and Type of School</b>								
Cost Item	Pre-School		Elementary		High School		College/Post-Grad	
	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
<b>Total Fees &amp; Direct Cost</b> (books, workbook, supplies, uniform, sports, others)	1,647	3,706	1,437	6,842	2,473	8,781	10,714	27,442
<b>Incidental Cost</b> (transportation, tutor, rentals, other incidentals, except school meals)	603	1,020	1,013	2,225	2,773	3,487	6,936	9,070
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,250</b>	<b>4,726</b>	<b>2,450</b>	<b>9,067</b>	<b>5,246</b>	<b>12,268</b>	<b>17,650</b>	<b>36,512</b>
Public:Private Ratio	<b>1:2.10</b>		<b>1:3.70</b>		<b>1:2.34</b>		<b>1:2.07</b>	

Table 5. Amounts spent in children's education every year according to educational level and type of school



Private education costs even more in highly urbanized areas. This observation applies to all levels of education. In comparison, there is little variation on the total cost of public education across the different areas covered by the study. That means that families who send their children to public schools spend basically the same amount for school fees and related expenditure.

The cost of tertiary education is quite high. This is generally true even in local and state colleges that enjoy government subsidies. School fees and other direct costs amount to a yearly average of P10,714 for public tertiary schools. The direct cost of private college education is about three times more, averaging P27,442 per year.

In comparison, the cost of preschool and basic education is much cheaper. Nonetheless, even this amount 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, as noted in the survey. The higher cost of tertiary education partly explains the relatively small number of students reaching college level.

### C. Policy Recommendations

The Philippines is losing out on all its EFA indicators except for gender parity. While the DepED hopes that reforms would enable the country to meet its EFA targets by 2015, the national government is not as hopeful. In its progress report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), it reported a failure in the MDG 2 target on universal primary education and admitted that it is unlikely that the country will be able to make good on its 2015 commitment. Ironically, the government expressed confidence that it will achieve its poverty eradication target as signaled by the decline in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty. Clearly, pronouncements on the bright prospect for the economy alongside the bleak picture for education indicates the national government's lackluster effort in translating economic growth into better education for Filipinos.





President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo signed in mid-2006 the Philippine EFA Plan 2015 which carried the slogan “Functional Literacy for All.” The EFA Plan aspires to deliver targets in Early Child Care and Development (ECCD), elementary and secondary education as well as promises to implement an effective Alternative Learning System (ALS) to address learning needs of out-of-school youth and adults who were not able to complete basic education in schools. A National EFA Committee chaired by the DepEd and co-chaired by E-Net Philippines was put in place in October 2006 to oversee EFA implementation. This move to reinstate<sup>10</sup> an alliance for EFA with government and civil society at the helm is commendable but requires political will. Moving into the last quarter of 2007, government agencies tasked to help work for education have yet to sign the Memorandum of Agreement for the governance of EFA.

While DepEd has jumpstarted reforms in aid of EFA, the government has yet to get its act together. The Philippines’ failure in EFA 1 may repeat itself and be even worse if the Arroyo administration hesitates to take drastic measures in the years leading to 2015. The quality of public education has deteriorated to such an alarming level that the country now ranks among the poorest performers in East Asia. Its cohort survival rate has fared no better than some of the poorest countries in Africa such as Burkina Faso and Ethiopia. The dismal state of education in public schools and the absence of programmatic and appropriate learning for disadvantaged adolescents and adults will result in grave social costs.

To meet the challenges in EFA, E-Net Philippines put forward the following policy recommendations:

- 1. Address School Dropouts.** Develop a coherent and effective programme for dropout prevention based on the local situation and the specific reasons that force children out of school. Intervention measures must be designed to suit specific grade levels in both elementary and secondary levels. These include:
  - Ensure that children start school at the right age;
  - Identify children at risk of dropping out and implement a pro-active program to mitigate the factors that increase the pressure on students and families to drop out;
  - Make every school accountable for every student dropping out of school;
  - Implement a programme that will encourage children to return to school as soon as they drop out;
  - Implement an effective referral system to keep track of out-

of-school children and ensure that they are given ample opportunities to return to school or enlist in alternative learning programme.

2. **Reduce Overall School Cost.** Abolish all formal and “informal” school fees and other forms of contributions, whether mandatory or “voluntary,” stop requiring workbooks that the poor cannot afford and bring down the costs of additional projects and activities.
3. **Improve quality of education by enforcing current policies aimed at making learning in schools learner-centered.** These policies include among others, the “70-30” DepEd policy that endorses integrating local knowledge and learning approaches in the curriculum, the ban on corporal punishment that ensures students are protected in schools, and the observance of the rights of children and youth in schools as embodied in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
4. **Targeted Scholarships for the Poor and the Disadvantaged.** Implement an expanded scholarship programme for the poor and disadvantaged groups, including children from indigenous communities, child workers, street children, the disabled and severely malnourished, teenage mothers and children affected by armed conflict. Institute pro-poor policies in schools and provide subsidies for poor families to cover costs of transportation, school supplies and uniforms.
5. **Health and Nutrition.** Implement an effective supplementary feeding and mid-day meal programme within the context of a comprehensive school-based health and nutrition program.
6. **Expand the Alternative Learning System.** Expand the literacy and alternative learning programmes to reach out to more learners, targeting particularly the poor and hard-to-reach areas, indigenous peoples’ communities and areas with high dropouts. Develop the framework, learning strategies and curricula to ensure appropriate learning and teaching approaches, taking into consideration the culture, tradition and indigenous knowledge system.
7. **Mobilising Resources for Affirmative Actions for the Marginalised.** The National EFA Committee should push for education programmes for disadvantaged groups and consequently affirmative budget allocation for these

programmes to benefit communities with high education deficits; mobilise adequate resources for marginalised groups by ensuring that at least 3% of the education budget is allocated for literacy, alternative learning and adult education as endorsed by UNESCO and other international agencies. A proactive intervention necessitates immediately identifying and reaching out to these children. The longer the time spent from school, the more difficult it is for the children to return to school.

- 8. Increase Investment in Basic Education.** Progressively raise the budget for basic education to reach the international benchmark of 5% to 6% of GDP in line with the recommendations of UNESCO and other international agencies.
- 9. Budget Efficiency.** Implement an effective budget and expenditure tracking in the education sector to monitor fund utilization and assess the effectiveness of programs and projects implemented. This will ensure that every peso is spent judiciously and effectively to achieve maximum impact, avoid wastage and corruption, and ensure transparency and participation in all phases of the budget cycle.
- 10. Information Access and Disclosure.** Adopt a full disclosure policy on information concerning education performance, budget and financial transactions, organisation and personnel and specific projects, and policies.
- 11. Strengthen Participation in Education Governance.** Expand and strengthen the Local School Board (LSB) to improve participation, transparency and accountability. Ensure active participation of parents, communities and civil society organizations in planning, Special Education Fund (SEF) budgeting and decision-making. People's participation should be institutionalised for education planning and decision-making in schools and education programmes implemented by the Government, especially including alternative learning programmes catering to disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

## Endnotes

- [1] Beginning SY 2002-2003, participation rate was derived based on the age group consisting of 6-11 years old for elementary and 12-15 years old for secondary whereas the previous system used 7-12 and 13-16 years old for elementary and secondary, respectively. Hence, SY 2002-2003 data onwards cannot be compared with that of the previous years.
- [2] The estimates were generated by Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS), Department of Education based on population growth projection. These estimates are consistent with the study done by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in its global monitoring of out-of-school children.
- [3] UNESCO Institute of Statistics. Children Out of School: Measuring Exclusion from Primary Education.(2005) Retrieved May 10, 2007 from the UIS Website: ([http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/educgeneral/OOSC\\_EN\\_WEB\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/educgeneral/OOSC_EN_WEB_FINAL.pdf)).
- [4] National Statistics Office. Philippine Survey on Children 2001. (2002) Retrieved June 14, 2007, from the NSO Website:<http://www.census.gov.ph/data/pressrelease/2002/ch01prtx.html>.
- [5] National Statistics Office. Children of the Philippines, How many are they, Factsheet No. 1, citing NSO 2001 Survey on children as source of basic data. Retrieved April 10, 2007, from the NSO Website: [http://www.census.gov.ph/data/sectordata/OC\\_FactSheet.pdf](http://www.census.gov.ph/data/sectordata/OC_FactSheet.pdf).
- [6] Consortium for Street Children. A Civil Society Forum for East and South East Asia on Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Street Children 12-14 March 2003, Bangkok, Thailand. Citing DSWD (1998) as source of basic data. Retrieved March 10, 2007, from the CSC Website: <http://www.streetchildren.org.uk/reports/southeastasia.pdf>.
- [7] Quisumbing, Agnes R. Intergenerational transfers in Philippine rice villages. Gender differences in traditional inheritance customs.(1994, 1997)
- [8] Manasan, Rosario. Financing the Millennium Development Goals: The Philippines, Final Report. (2007) Retrieved April 10, 2007, from the NSO Website: <http://dirp4.pids.gov.ph/ris/dps/pidsdps0706.pdf>.
- [9] Philippine Mid-Decade Assessment Report. (Department of Education Report to 8th EFA Meeting in UNESCO, Bangkok). Feb 26 – March 2, 2007.
- [10] The government convened a grand alliance for EFA I in 1990– 2000 where civil society was not represented. This inter-agency committee, however, did not function and left sole responsibility for EFA I to the then Ministry of Education.







*(Continued from inside front cover)*

RWS found the need for pursuing a vigorous, evidence-based policy advocacy to build shared understanding and rally civil society organizations (CSOs) around common goals, establish credibility with opinion-framers and decision-makers, marshal evidence as part of a systematic strategy to influence policy, and supply missing data on excluded and unreached sectors. Campaign calls and messages needed to be supported by credible evidence, based on the real state of education in communities.

#### Asia-South Pacific Education Watch Initiative and Publications

These publications are the result of education watch processes initiated and pursued since 2006 by the RWS programme of ASPBAE and GCE, in partnership with national education coalitions from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea.

Building on the successful Education Watch model implemented by CAMPE in Bangladesh, the Asia-South Pacific Education Watch (EdWatch) was designed and coordinated by the RWS Steering Committee composed of ASPBAE, Education International, and GlobalMarch Against Child Labor, and the RWS Asia Pacific staff.

EdWatch has emerged as an independent, citizen-based monitoring mechanism for assessing the status of education at the regional, national, and local levels, providing well-founded bases for advocacy and education campaign work and strengthening CSO capacities for policy engagement in education. It is designed to track governments' progress in achieving quality education for all, with focus on addressing the education deficit for disadvantaged sectors.

#### Challenge to Civil Society

The daunting education situation in the region poses a challenge to CSOs to sound a clear wake-up call to governments to shake off their complacency, go beyond rhetoric, summon the political will, and redouble efforts. There is a crying need to assess existing education programmes, allocate more funds and resources for education, and institute targeted measures to address education disadvantage.

Since Dakar 2000, CSO participation in EFA processes has seen the progressive growth in strength and maturity of national education coalitions, and their developing capacity to conduct research and policy analysis and advocacy. Armed with their EdWatch findings, CSOs and education stakeholders can put together more coherent education policy agenda for lobbying, disseminate information to enhance public awareness of education issues, effectively engage governments in education planning and policy-making, and strongly assert and sharpen CSO and stakeholders' participation in education governance at all levels.



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