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## Recent trends in out-of-school children in the Philippines

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## Recent Trends in Out-of-School Children in the Philippines

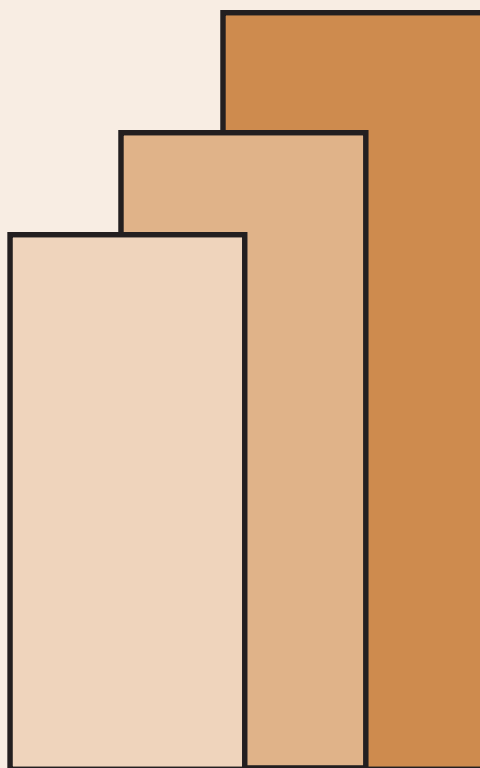
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# Recent Trends in Out of School Children in the Philippines<sup>1</sup>

by

Clarissa C. David and Jose Ramon G. Albert<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

In 2008, about 12 percent of five-to-fifteen year old children were not in school, five years later this had gone down to about 5 percent. Adjusted net primary school attendance rates have increased from 90.8 percent in 2008 to 96.45% in 2013. In this paper, we examine this decline in the proportion of out of school children (OOSC) and improved primary school participation in the country and attribute them to three key government interventions. First is the passage and full implementation of mandatory kindergarten and the K-12 Law, which aims to enhance basic education through key reforms in the curricula and addition of kindergarten and two years to basic education. Second is the increasing budget that the Department of Education has obtained from the national government. And third is the expansion of the government's conditional cash transfer program that requires families under the program to send their children to school. These three broad public programs to invest in our human capital changed the way basic education is implemented in the country, and have helped bring the country closer to its goal of universal primary education. Ways forward, include continued making full use of information systems especially the learner information system, improving school participation in the secondary education level, monitoring and evaluating the alternative learning system and alternative delivery modes of schooling, addressing gender disparities in basic education, and improving the quality of basic education.

Key Words: out of school children (OOSC), school participation, school attendance,

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<sup>1</sup> This discussion paper is culled from the Epilogue chapter of the report on the Philippine Country Study on Out of School Children (OOSC). The country study is undertaken together with the Department of Education (DepEd), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

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## 1. Introduction

This year, the jury is out regarding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 8 goals on poverty reduction, education for all, and other related development goals that 189 members of the United Nations (UN) committed to achieving. The MDGs have been supported by 21 quantified and time-bound targets by 2015, and 60 statistical indicators. For instance, for poverty reduction, the goal was to reduce by half the proportion of people in extreme poverty from 1990 to 2015, with one of the indicators for measuring this poverty reduction goal being the percentage of the population with incomes less than \$1 a day (in 1990 prices, or \$1.90 in 2011 prices). Official poverty statistics using national poverty lines suggest that the country will not be reaching its poverty reduction target this year, although the World Bank estimates using recently released international poverty lines (using 2011 purchasing power parity US \$1.90) that poverty targets in the country were already achieved in 2009<sup>3</sup>. In the education front, there is more definitive good news in the basic education sector.

In 2010, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies was tasked to write a Country Study on Out of School Children (OOSC). Using data sourced from household surveys conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority for 2007 and 2008, data sourced from the Department of Education (DepED) from 2005 to 2009, as well primary data collected from field interviews, the OOSC Report was drafted in 2011 and finalized in 2012. The PIDS also released some preliminary results from the research inquiry. Albert *et al.* (2012) described the profile of OOSC in the country, while Albert and David (2012) discussed demand-side and supply side issues hindering primary school participation and completion.

Since 2008, much has changed in the picture of OOSC in the Philippines. At the moment of this writing, data from 2013 household surveys conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) have already been released allowing sufficient analysis of historical trends in OOSC prevalence. The overall picture is quite positive, with national-level trends revealing substantial improvements in reducing OOSC in the country. This discussion paper reports on these trends, progress in the DepED's policies, and the extent to which the recommendations made in the OOSC Report<sup>4</sup> have been addressed.

## 2. Improvements in Basic Education Indicators

In 2008, the rate of OOSC to total number of children between the ages of 5 and 15 was 11.7%, this was reduced to less than half by 2012 to 5.21% and likely to continue its downward trend as the DepED crafts and carries out its “last mile” strategy to get the last 5% into schools through alternative delivery modes (ADMs) of education and bringing education services to challenging populations such as children who are disabled, indigenous peoples, and isolated communities. The sharpest decline happened between 2011 and 2012 when the DepED officially started to make Kindergarten mandatory for incoming primary school students. This meant that all students starting at Grade 1 by 2013 should have at least one year of pre-school experience, leveling off expectations of teachers regarding aptitudes and abilities when primary school begins. While

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<sup>3</sup> <http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://dirp4.pids.gov.ph/webportal/CDN/EVENTS/OOSC%20Country%20Report.pdf>

participation of those 3-5 year old children in pre-primary school was 35% in 2008, it increased to 48% in 2011 as per estimates from the Annual Poverty Indicator Survey of the PSA.

All regions experienced a decline in OOSC incidence. Except for ARMM, the rates of OOSC in the 5-15 year old age group are in the single-digits (Table 1). The incidence of OOSC in ARMM remains a challenge, although it was reduced by 7.8%, in 2012 it still stood at an unacceptably high 16.7%. If targeted interventions can be designed to improve education access for provinces under ARMM and OOSC rates brought down to less than 10% it would make a significant dent in overall country OOSC rates. The largest declines happened in Regions 9 (Zamboanga) and 11 (Davao), with rate declines of over 10% bringing rates for both regions close to the national average after starting out with having among the highest incidence of OOSC in the country.

**Table 1. Rates (in % ) of Total Number of OOSC to Total Number of 5 to 15-Year-Old Children (and Standard Errors in Parentheses), 2008-2013 by Sex and By Region**

Region	2008		2010		2011		2013	
Ilocos	8.40	(0.60)	8.21	(0.01)	6.13	(0.01)	5.56	(0.01)
Cagayan Valley	10.90	(0.82)	9.74	(0.01)	7.41	(0.01)	4.12	(0.01)
Central Luzon	8.30	(0.54)	8.73	(0.01)	6.78	(0.01)	5.56	(0.01)
CALABARZON	8.50	(0.54)	9.10	(0.01)	6.74	(0.00)	3.50	(0.01)
MIMAROPA	12.90	(1.04)	11.14	(0.01)	7.40	(0.01)	5.53	(0.01)
Bicol	13.20	(0.73)	9.09	(0.01)	5.93	(0.01)	5.27	(0.01)
Western Visayas	11.30	(0.67)	12.16	(0.02)	7.17	(0.01)	2.47	(0.01)
Central Visayas	12.10	(0.77)	11.31	(0.01)	8.11	(0.01)	4.87	(0.01)
Eastern Visayas	14.50	(0.97)	10.63	(0.01)	8.57	(0.01)	4.81	(0.01)
Zamboanga Peninsula	16.50	(1.32)	12.58	(0.01)	9.29	(0.01)	5.66	(0.01)
Northern Mindanao	13.50	(1.00)	11.72	(0.01)	7.70	(0.01)	5.01	(0.01)
Davao	15.10	(0.95)	11.72	(0.01)	8.42	(0.01)	4.33	(0.01)
SOCCSKSARGEN	13.90	(1.01)	9.87	(0.01)	10.43	(0.01)	7.42	(0.01)
National Capital Region	7.90	(0.55)	5.45	(0.01)	6.91	(0.00)	3.64	(0.01)
Cordillera Administrative Region	8.70	(0.90)	7.05	(0.01)	5.56	(0.01)	7.72	(0.01)
Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)	24.20	(1.72)	26.01	(0.02)	20.43	(0.01)	16.73	(0.01)
Caraga	12.00	(0.87)	9.17	(0.01)	7.52	(0.01)	4.18	(0.01)
<b>PHILIPPINES</b>	11.70	(0.21)	10.42	(0.00)	8.00	(0.002)	5.21	(0.00)

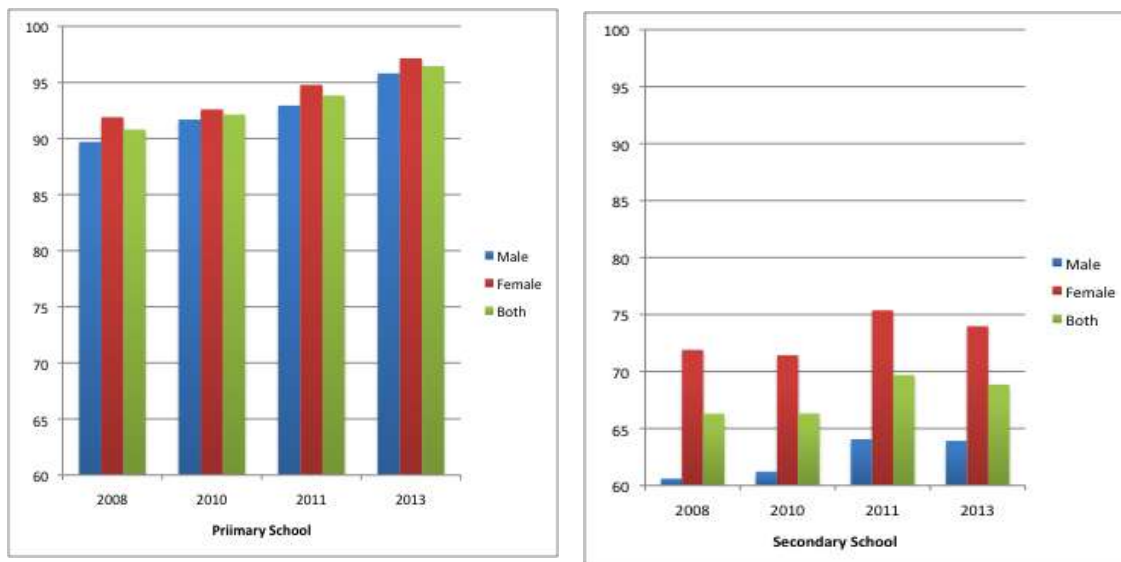
**Note: Authors' calculations using Annual Poverty Indicator Survey (APIS), PSA.**

By sex, the rate of decline is slightly higher among girls (compared to boys). Overall the OOSC rates were brought down by 55%, among boys the decline comprised 52% and among girls 60% of the percentage of OOSC incidence in 2008. The existing gender disparity increased slightly from 1:1.38 in favor of boys in 2008 to 1:1.65 in 2012. This persistent gender gap in OOSC and other performance measures in the DepED data was pointed out in the OOSC report, and while many improvements have been made resulting in overall declines in incidence of OOSC, the DepED, as well as the DSWD in its implementation of the 4Ps, still need to be mindful of the gender disparities in basic education, and consider pro-active measures to retain more boys in the system.

The decline in OOSC incidence is reflected in the net attendance rates, which for primary school increased from 90.8% in 2008 to 96.5% in 2013 (Figure 1). There are smaller, barely significant,

gains in secondary level enrollment rates. It increased from 66.3% to 68.9%. This is expected since much of the gains in primary school are a result of mandatory kindergarten. Increasing enrollment rates in high school will be more difficult and on this score the national level remains low. The government will need a different set of programs to increase participation and decrease dropout rates in high schools. It is in high schools where student teacher ratios are high, where boys become much more likely to drop out at higher rates, and where continuing school becomes more of an opportunity cost for poor families whose older children must work to bring in income. The rate of increase is the same between males and females; this means that enrollment rates remain 10% higher among the women. Addressing the gender gap in secondary education by improving retention rates among boys would make a significant dent in the OOSC incidence in the country. The decision by government

**Figure 1. Adjusted Net Attendance Rate (ANAR) among Primary and Secondary School-Age Children, 2008-2013 by Sex**



**Note: Authors' calculations using Annual Poverty Indicator Survey (APIS), PSA.**

Table 2 shows the school attendance rates of preprimary school-aged children by level of education by household head and by their per capita income quintile. The sharpest increase in school attendance among children 5 years old and below occurred among households with heads that are poorly educated. Mandatory Kindergarten delivered the largest benefit to the poor. In 2008 only 47.2% of children in the poorest families attended pre-school, compared to 82.1% of children in the upper middle-income families, a 34.9% difference. In 2013 the size of this difference shrank down to 5% because of large gains in getting children from the poorest families into Kindergarten. By 2013 92.2% of the poorest bracket families were attending Kindergarten, almost equal that of the richest at 98.3%. Since early education results in gains in primary school performance and beyond, the income gap results in early education gaps, which in turn results in overall achievement gaps between the rich and the poor. Improvements in access to pre-primary education for poor families through mandatory free provision of Kindergarten by the public school system may have an equalizing influence.

**Table 2. School Attendance Rates (in percent) of Preprimary School-Age Children in 2008-2013, by Level of Education of Household Head and by Per Capita Income Quintile**

Highest Educational Attainment of Household Head	2008						2010					
	Per Capita Income Quintile					All Quintiles	Per Capita Income Quintile					All Quintiles
	Lowest	Lower Middle	Middle	Upper Middle	Riches t		Lowest	Lower Middle	Middle	Upper Middle	Ri ch est	
At most preprimary	21.1	35.9	30.5*	100	100.0*	21.1	69.6	65.6	84.2	66.7	69.4	70.3
Some primary education	43.8	54.6	64.2	83.3	81.4	43.8	82.4	87.7	89.5	92.8	93.9	86.4
Some secondary education	54.9	62.5	74	80.6	90.5	54.9	87.9	88.9	93.4	94.4	95.3	91.5
Beyond secondary education	71.8	67.4	77.2	83.7	94	71.8	88.3	93.4	94.4	95.1	96.6	95.0
<b>PHILIPPINES</b>	47.2	58.6	70.9	82.1	92	47.2	83.4	87.9	92.1	94.1	96.0	89.6
Highest Educational Attainment of Household Head	2011						2013					
	Per Capita Income Quintile					All Quintiles	Per Capita Income Quintile					All Quintiles
	Lowest	Lower Middle	Middle	Upper Middle	Riches t		Lowest	Lower Middle	Middle	Upper Middle	Ri ch est	
At most preprimary	79.3	77.8	86.4	93.7	92.2	80.5	82.9	86.0	86.9	90.7	0.0	84.5
Some primary education	86.4	89.8	91.1	94.1	95.3	89.1	91.5	93.0	94.0	95.8	94.6	92.8
Some secondary education	90.7	93.3	94.0	96.3	96.8	93.8	94.7	95.2	96.0	97.5	98.0	96.0
Beyond secondary education	91.0	94.8	96.0	96.0	96.9	95.9	96.3	99.1	94.4	97.9	98.9	97.7
<b>PHILIPPINES</b>	87.4	91.2	93.2	95.7	96.7	92.0	92.2	94.1	94.9	97.2	98.3	94.8

**Note:** Authors' calculations using Annual Poverty Indicator Survey (APIS), PSA.

The APIS asks households for reasons why children are not in school. For primary aged children 6-11 years old, between 2007 and 2013, lack of personal interest grew in importance from 24% naming it as a reason to 34%. Note that the overall prevalence of OOSC has declined, and thus the profile of OOSC has changed. In 2007 the most frequently reason cited for a pre-primary aged child not being in school is that the child is too young. While it remains the most common reason for non-attendance (after all, there are 3 and 4-year old children in this group) it shrank from 84% to 65%. Among primary-aged children, the major reason (especially among those

aged 6 and 7 year olds) for nonattendance in 2007 and 2008 was their being too young, and this reason is no longer cited starting 2010.

**Table 3. Reasons for nonattendance in school for preprimary and primary school-aged children**

Reason for Nonattendance	Preprimary School-age Children (%)					Primary School-Age Children (%)				
	2007	2008	2010	2011	2013	2007	2008	2010	2011	2013
Lack of personal interest	3.83	6.94	17.13	57.08	11.11	24.49	31.68	47.23	54.72	33.5
High cost of education	4.53	3.62	4.19	8.76	13.03	12.9	11.52	10.53	10.51	20.42
Too young to go to school	83.52	80.46	69.73	10.74	65.38	34.03	29.21			
Illness/disability	0.54	1.06	0.94	3	4.66	8.08	9.48	10.68	15.24	23
Lack of nearby schools	4.53	3.88	6.23	8.88	5.15	8.61	7.45	10.86	8.17	2.29
Employment	0	0				0.31	0.13	0.35	0.59	0
Other reasons (e.g., school records, marriage*, housekeeping)	3.05	4.04	1.78	11.54	0.67	11.55	10.53	20.7	11.36	20.79

**Note:** Authors' calculations using Annual Poverty Indicator Survey (APIS), PSA.

Getting OOSC, particularly pre-school aged children, into school is the first part of the challenge. Once in the system the DepED must strive to keep retention rates high to get as many children to the end of the secondary school cycle as it can. Retention rates are improved by keeping interest in school high, tracking students, recognizing warning signs of dropping out, and motivating high achievement in the student body, among others. Close teacher and administrator engagement with students and parents can result in better graduation rates. The gains in survival rates (from the first to the last grade of the respective level of education), over the past few years have been modest. From 2010 to 2013 it was a gain of 4.25% to a national level of 78.48% (Table 4). The survival rate to the last grade of secondary education improved by roughly one percentage point to 81%. While overall dropout rates for primary education appears very low, 0.51% in 2013 across the country, it masks higher dropouts among boys, which is at twice the rate as girls.

**Table 4. Cohort survival rates 2008-2013**

Cohort Survival Rate	2008	2009	2010	2013
Primary	75.39	74.38	74.23	78.48
Secondary	79.73	78.44	79.43	80.58

Source: Basic Education Information System (BEIS), DepED.

Note: Data from DepED and DepED-supervised Schools

As was pointed out in Albert and David (2010), while the reported “lack of interest” in going to school may be hypothesized as more a lack of parental interest to send their children to school given some anecdotes from teachers about parents not caring enough to watch over their child’s daily attendance in school, field work suggests that “Child motivation and ability issues are even more common than parents not valuing education.” That is, parents undervaluing education is more the exception than the rule with parents saying they prefer to have their children finish at least second year high school as it is at this point when they expect “returns” on investments to schooling. Interviews with parents for the OOSC report reveal that most parents will prioritize



expenses in education over other costs save for the most basic ones, such as food, shelter and clothing. The decision to pull children out of school is usually out of financial difficulties.

There are also regional differences that would be instructive in understanding where interventions are more urgently needed. This includes over 1% dropout rates in ARMM and Central Visayas among boys at the primary level (see Table 5). In high school, national level dropout rate is at 2.47% with sex disparities worsening as children get older. Males are twice as likely to drop out than females in high school. Regional differences show much higher male disadvantage in the Ilocos region, Bicol region, Western Visayas, and the Cordillera Administrative Region. Ilocos region is highly agricultural with farmers engaging in intensive cropping throughout the year, thus, labor demands for young males are likely very high. All these regions are agricultural, growing rice, vegetables, coconut, sugar, and coffee. More research needs to be examined as to the relationship between the demand for agricultural labor and higher dropout rates among boys in the higher grades. Aside from working on supply side issues, the DepED will need to advocate that DSWD change its uniform cash grants in the CCT to a differentiated one to help address differing opportunity costs for staying in school between boys and girls, and between older and younger children from poor families.

**Table 5. Dropout rate from primary and secondary education, by region**

Region	Primary			Secondary		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Ilocos Region	0.22	0.11	0.17	2.43	0.93	1.69
Cagayan Valley	0.54	0.27	0.41	3.72	1.60	2.65
Central Luzon	0.56	0.31	0.44	2.86	1.47	2.17
CALABARZON	0.90	0.49	0.70	4.07	2.11	3.09
MIMAROPA	0.52	0.28	0.41	3.18	1.48	2.31
Bicol	0.53	0.27	0.40	2.64	1.05	1.85
Western Visayas	0.86	0.41	0.65	4.11	1.68	2.88
Central Visayas	1.13	0.65	0.90	4.24	2.24	3.23
Eastern Visayas	0.64	0.40	0.52	3.24	1.61	2.39
Zamboanga Peninsula	0.60	0.33	0.47	4.85	2.10	3.46
Northern Mindanao	0.51	0.29	0.40	2.69	1.43	2.04
Davao Region	0.51	0.27	0.39	2.34	1.30	1.80
SOCCSKSARGEN	0.45	0.26	0.36	3.01	1.51	2.23
National Capital Region	0.56	0.33	0.45	2.69	1.64	2.17
Cordillera Administrative Region	0.45	0.18	0.32	4.03	2.60	3.20
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	1.02	0.75	0.88	3.75	1.35	2.53
CARAGA	0.53	0.28	0.41	2.17	1.19	1.67
<b>PHILIPPINES</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>3.32</b>	<b>1.64</b>	<b>2.47</b>

Source: BEIS, DepED.

Note: Data from DepED and DepED-supervised Schools

All these recent data show that the DepED has made significant gains in decreasing the number of OOSC, and having children attend pre-primary and primary school. More interventions though are needed to bring school attendance rates to higher levels in high school.

### 3. Investments in Human Capital

Achievements in decreasing the proportion of OOSC in the country can be attributed in large part to three interrelated government investments in basic education and human capital development. First is the passage and full implementation of the K-12 law or Republic Act 10533, an act that aims to enhance the basic education system through key reforms in curricula and addition of two years and Kindergarten to basic education. The law was signed on May 15, 2013, but implementation had actually started earlier. Second, a direct result of the K-12 law

passage, is the increasing budget the DepED has been able to obtain from the national government. Finally, the government has also expanded the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)*, its Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program dramatically. Families receiving assistance through CCT are required to send their children to school, and all beneficiary children must attend at least 85% of the school days to avail of the cash grants. It is an intervention that required close coordination between the DSWD and the DepED, successfully implemented with tracking and monitoring of pupils enrolled in the CCT. Together these three broad programs introduced massive change in the way the DepED does its work.

The K-12 adoption necessitated a re-orientation of the basic education curriculum, improved management efficiency, comprehensive data collection and tracking, overall research-based policy responsiveness, and built-in institutional flexibility, coupled with school-based management that has empowered school officials to make necessary interventions. While the law and its implementing rules lay out many different policies, there are overarching features that would directly address some of the recommendations made in the OOSC report. The details of which changes address which recommendations will be itemized in the later part of this section. Generally though, the key features of the law relevant to reducing OOSC include: (1) strengthening early education by mandating universal kindergarten education, (2) enhancing and contextualizing the curriculum for learner needs, and (3) mother tongue-based multilingual education in the early years.<sup>5</sup>

Over the recent years, there have been significant increases in the DepED's budget in absolute value, although it remains roughly the same as a proportion of the national budget. The education budget in 2015 totals P361.7 billion, representing an increase of 18.6% from the previous year<sup>6</sup>. This has led to budget expansions down to the school-level, including increases in the allotments for MOOE per pupil, one of the main problems identified in this report. According to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the increase includes a 53.9 billion allocation for Basic Education Facilities, sufficient to build 9,500 classrooms, repair over 31 thousand classrooms, develop over 13,000 water and sanitation facilities, and purchase 1.3 million chairs.<sup>7</sup>

The 4Ps, the government's CCT program, was also expanded in 2015 to a budget of P62.3 billion covering 4.3 million families. It started in 2007 with a budget of P50 million to cover 6,000 families and has been expanded exponentially since then, owing to positive interim evaluation results. The sharpest increases happened between 2010 and 2013 when it went from 1 million families to close to 4 million families. While the impacts on overall national poverty rates might not yet be evident, the impacts on school attendance are clear (Albert, *et al.*, 2015). A recent development in the 4Ps is extension of support to beneficiary children until 18 years old or when they finish high school (whichever comes first). This would allow beneficiary families to have better income prospects in the future to lessen their chances of staying trapped in poverty. (Reyes and Tabuga, 2012). There are specific conditions in relation to education that beneficiary families need to comply with, those in high school have a minimum maintaining grade point

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<sup>5</sup> Full-text of the law and its implementing rules and regulations are available at <http://www.gov.ph/k-12/#RA10533>

<sup>6</sup> 2011 budget=207B; 2012 budget=238.8B

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.rappler.com/nation/78775-2015-budget-allocation>

average while those in primary school can repeat a grade once at most and will be disqualified from the program if he/she does not pass the second time.

The next section reviews recommendations made in the OOSC report and examines whether these were adopted by the DepED, when appropriate.

#### **4. Status of OOSC Report Recommendations**

A total of 48 recommendations were enumerated to approach the problem of OOSC. Most of the recommendations were for DepED action while some needed cooperation with local governments, NGOs, or the surrounding community. Majority of these recommendations have been adopted in full or in part as a result of the implementation of the K-12 system. The recommendations fall under 5 broad categories: (1) early childhood education for children 3-5 years old, (2) OOSC among primary school-aged children and the role of ADMs, CCT, and community engagement in bringing them into schools, (3) curriculum responsiveness and flexibility to address performance of boys and other underperforming groups, (4) operational challenges such as budgeting and resource constraints, and (5) evaluations of alternative delivery modes and alternative learning systems. Each category contains a number of recommendations; we do not present all items again in full and instead summarize the spirit of the set of recommendations. Following the summary is a discussion of the steps already taken and their likely impact on the OOSC problem. These are presented in the light of the updated information above which shows remarkable progress in reducing the problem of OOSC across the country.

##### *4.1. Early Childhood Education (ECE).*

In 2008 a third of five-year-old children were not in school, even when the DepED had a substantial presence of Kindergarten programs and other similar early childhood education programs across the country. Beliefs that children are too young to go to school at age 5 were prevalent as a reason for holding them back from enrolling. It meant that even when children were almost 6 years old at the start of the school year, parents delayed their enrollment. By the time they are entered into the first grade, they are overaged. These findings were the basis for making a set of recommendations in relation to getting as many young children into schools by strengthening the links between early education programs and primary school proper, as well as strengthening cooperation between the DepED and other providers of pre-primary education like the DSWD, private schools, and different levels of local governments.

The recommendations made included the following (original numbers used in the Executive Summary in parenthesis):

- Communicate and advocate the importance of Kindergarten education among parents because it gives children the best start and improves the likelihood of completing school. (1)
- Match the expectations between Philippine Early Learning Development Standards (ELDS) and Kindergarten until Grade 3 among teachers. (2)
- Starting in ECE and following through to the rest of primary school, foster active learning in the classroom as opposed to passive learning. Instruction in early grades and

kindergarten should utilize inclusive, experiential, and kinesthetic learning methods. Individualized approaches to teaching that adjusts according to the children, with special attention to the different learning needs of boys, was recommended to improve learning outcomes. (3)

- Campaign to advocate getting children enrolled in primary school at the right age and to invest in early education. On-time school entry interventions should be intensified. (4)
- Provide parents with incentives to participate in prompt registration of children. (5)
- Analyze results of the Student Readiness Assessment (SReA) for implications on classroom management in Grade 1. (6)
- Specify guidelines in operationalizing the six-year-old age-at-entry requirement. (7)
- Increase investments in ECE to build more facilities for 3-5 year old enrollees, support alternative modes of delivering ECE, improve quality of services by strengthening accreditation systems, intensify health and nutrition component of ECE. (22)
- Improve training of DCC and kindergarten teachers in cooperation with TESDA and DSWD. (26, 34)
- Fully implement the national home-based ECCD implementation plan to expand access of 0-6 year-old children to ECCD by promoting home-based ECCD programs. (33)

Almost all of these recommendations have been addressed by the partial implementation of mandatory Kindergarten starting in the SY 2011-2012. In preparation for the passage of the law, DepED had planned and executed expansion of its workforce, infrastructure, and supplies, to accommodate the influx of 5-year old children in the system. RA No. 10157 known as the Kindergarten Act institutionalized mandatory Kinder to be provided by the DepED, including provisions for medium of instruction, teaching strategies, and learning materials. The implications of the Kindergarten Act on these recommendations are varied, from simple requirement of pre-primary education, to teacher training, to curriculum development. For example, it is no longer urgent to advocate early childhood education among parents and to build more facilities in ECE to support alternative modes of ECE delivery given the expansion of offerings in primary schools.

Universal kindergarten was pursued in order to improve children's preparation for entry into primary education. Students will learn the alphabet, numbers, shapes, and colors through play-based techniques such as games, songs, and dance. Instruction will be in the mother tongue until 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, leveling the field across learners that speak dialects outside of English and Filipino. Recommendations to match expectations between ELDS and Kindergarten to Grade 3 is accomplished because the same system that teaches Kinder takes in the students into primary school proper. When all children go through Kinder, they all enter the first grade with enough knowledge to learn in equal paces. Designing learning for individualized needs is in principle, built into the curriculum design, and should address some of the problems brought about by passive-learning style techniques employed in early years of primary school. This flexible activity-based teaching should also address issues with different learning needs of boys. While the design has been able to accommodate the recommendations to improve teaching in early grades, it must be acknowledged that the new curriculum demands lower pupil to teacher and pupil to classroom ratios. Individualized learning cannot happen in crowded classes of 5-year old children. Monitoring of class size and fast response to shortages is necessary to deliver the outcomes promised by the revised curriculum in early grades.

The issue of late registration of students was addressed through intensive early registration programs. DepED starts registration of students in January for the June intake for one or two weeks. The policies are also clear about the exact age when children should be assigned to Kinder or Grade 1. If the child is 5 years old in October he/she is assigned to Kinder, and if 6 years old is assigned to Grade 1. Early registration allows schools to appropriately plan for the next academic year, with a more informed idea of the size of the student body. Part of the program's goal is to catch the "last mile" students, what the DepED calls the "least, lost, and last." These are students that are especially difficult to bring into the system, including street children, those in conflict-affected areas, indigenous peoples' children, children with disabilities, and older children who are not in school. Early registration gives the community enough time to track, find, and deliver them to schools, and gives the schools enough time to plan for appropriate education interventions when needed.

The law making Kindergarten fully the responsibility of primary schools meant that a significant portion of the recommendations regarding increased investments in ECE, building additional facilities, hiring more and better teachers, supporting alternative modes of delivery such as home-based ECCD, and strengthening accreditation systems are addressed. In schoolyear 2012-2013 over 1.7 million children were enrolled into Kindergarten<sup>8</sup>. While these demands for more resources bore down on the system, overall input shortages in classrooms, teachers, seats, and textbooks were reduced drastically. This meant the needs in facilities were filled for the most part. Accreditation systems for kindergarten and expanded support for home-based ECCD are no longer in urgent demand since it is being provided by public schools.

Full employment of teachers at the Kinder level has become more systematic. Applicants with a college degree in elementary, family life, psychology and other areas are considered qualified to teach. Volunteer programs have been phased out as the budget increased to cover the salaries of kinder teachers. Those who have been serving in a volunteer capacity and receiving only allowances were absorbed and given permanent positions. The bulk of the new personnel items created for Kinder were filled with people who had been volunteering.

On recommendations pertaining to early education, the remaining issues are related to ensuring teaching quality and evaluation of outcomes. The thousands of additional teachers hired to handle Kindergarten were added en masse. Continuous training should be provided to improve the base level of teaching skill and to ensure that the envisioned teaching approach for Kindergarten as mandated by law is properly carried out in classrooms.

#### *4.2. Curriculum, Teaching, and the Achievement of Boys.*

One of the main thrusts of the recommendations is the need to address the gender disparity in student achievement. This report in fact advocates various forms of affirmative action to help achieve parity across boys and girls in primary school and beyond. Revamping the K-12 curriculum for flexibility, learner-centered approaches, contextualization, and enhancement should help make lessons more engaging for boys, but the degree to which this will happen is dependent on how well teachers are trained.

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<sup>8</sup> State of Education presentation of Sec. Bro. Armin Luistro to the PBeD. March 28, 2012. Retrieved <http://www.slideshare.net/arangkadaph/state-of-education-in-the-philippines-2012>.

The recommendations made included the following:

- Implement a flexible, responsive curriculum and learner-centered classroom management to address the needs of the pupils, especially the boys, and make them more actively engaged in the classroom. (14)
- Enhance teachers' skills for appropriateness to child development principles, learner-centered teaching and learning approaches, and competency in teaching the curriculum. Included are strategies to improve the engagement of boys in classrooms. (15)
- Train teachers with strategies to motivate and involve boys in lessons. Hire more male teachers to improve the highly skewed female:male ratio in public schools. This can be done through targeted scholarships and other similar affirmative action programs. In general the Department should be more pro-active about addressing the gender disparities between boys and girls in all outcome indicators, starting with disseminating information about the gap within the system and encouraging schools to take active part in trying to understand sources of disparities in achievement. (16)
- Ensure distribution of GAD lesson exemplars to school districts. Organize appropriate mechanisms for the implementation of the lesson exemplars, including provisions for teacher training programs. (18)
- Fully adopt NCBTS in teacher trainings and induction programs. Reinforce the teacher development within a holistic framework through programs to improve understanding of the child's brain, competency in teaching the curriculum, skills in learner-centered teaching, and handling ADMs. (27)
- Fully implement the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) and establish provisions for the production of pertinent teaching support materials and training of teachers. (31)
- Use the gender budget of the DepED to address gender disparities in student achievements. (48)

Since the new curriculum should be responsive to individual learner differences, when designing learning activities in the classroom teachers would take into account factors that determine potentially varying learning styles, such as gender and context. By design at least, the curriculum should address at least some of the disparities in learning rates between girls and boys. However no specific instructional assistance has been developed or promoted to try to shore up boys' achievements.

DepED's hiring policies have been made stricter and more systematic. Applicants are assessed based on criteria that include performance in the licensure exam, their educational background, teaching experience, specialized training, teaching demonstration, interview, and communication skills. This tightening was accomplished through the application of higher cutoff scores for aspiring teachers, making the application procedure more competitive and highly selective. While there is a large supply of potential teachers, the challenge is matching specialization with the needs of K-12's curriculum. Specialization is necessary to teach from 4<sup>th</sup> grade and beyond, so the pipeline of specialized teachers must be carefully tracked moving forward.

There have been no affirmative action policies put in place to hire more male teachers. While there are existing scholarship programs provided for high school students interested in entering

the teaching profession, these have not been used to try to bring in more male teachers into public schools. Funded by Philippine Business for Education Development (PBED), college scholarships are given with the aim of producing 1,000 teachers. DepED has suggested that CHED leverage its large fund for college scholarships toward the same goal, in addition to the CHED's policies of funding students in STEM courses.

Full implementation of mother tongue-based multilingual education is underway. The range of languages and dialects officially used was expanded in 2012 to include Bahasa Sug, Bikol, Cebuano, Chabacano, Hiligaynon, Iloko, Kapampangan, Maguindanaoan, Merano, Pangasinense, Tagalog, and Waray. There are plans to add to this list over the next years. English and Filipino are taught as subjects beginning first grade, by the 6<sup>th</sup> grade English and Filipino are phased in as the primary languages of instruction.

By and large the suggestions that DepED respond in a pro-active way to the large male disadvantage in public schools have not been taken up, and while OOSC prevalence rates are down, the persistent underachievement of boys remains. Unless programs are designed and implemented specifically to address the problem, that gap will remain and it threatens to stymie the progress in bringing universal COMPLETE primary education. It is important to study the phenomenon of high dropout rates and low academic performance among boys in a systematic and in-depth manner, especially since there appears little interest in adopting extraordinary measures to find a suitable policy response. An accounting of the scale and scope of the problem, combined with a systematic study of the potential causes within the education system, would go a long way in finding these policies the support it needs.

#### *4.3. Bringing education to older OOSC.*

Three general areas of intervention are recommended as sites to help bring older children the education they need: engaging with the local governments and communities, alternative delivery modes of education (ADM), and proper adherence to conditions laid out in the 4Ps. Older out of school children have dropped out or temporarily ceased schooling either for economic or motivation issues. Most of these are boys who are already working or have lost interest. Compared to getting young children into the early grades, this is a more difficult multifaceted challenge. The recommendations were:

- Further school-mechanism teacher-community linkages as a means of quick detection of truancy and dropout. Enlist help of local officials to enforce anti-truancy law. (9)
- Introduce innovations in small scales to cope with seasonal needs for labor during harvest, which results in higher dropout rates among boys in the higher grades. Since these are very localized problems, school-initiated programs are necessary in the design and development of mechanisms to keep these children in school. Interventions may include adopting more flexible school calendars, use of self-learning instructional modes for short periods of the school year, or alter school hours. (10)
- Improve current design of 4Ps to provide greater incentives for subgroups with lower participation rates. Might be effective to increase cash incentives for older children to encourage school completion. Advocate expansion and sustained support through 4Ps and strictly implement targeting scheme to catch the poorest families. (11, 47)

- Broader macro solutions like a coherent population policy, an antipoverty strategy, and an effective livelihood and employment promotion program must be pursued vigorously by government in tandem with the CCT. (12)
- Develop alternative modes of kindergarten such as the catch-up program, provided for under the IRR of RA 19157, for children six years old and above under especially difficult circumstances such as children affected or displaced by armed conflict, urban resettlement, disasters and child labor practice.

The intervention mechanisms were already in place when these recommendations were made, some expansions and revisions were made, in particular by the 4Ps program to cover older children. In the early registration program described above, along with the *Brigada Eskwela* program, DepED's field personnel engage the LGUs and barangay officials in identifying individuals that should be brought into schools.

To deal with the seasonal dropoff of students as well as adverse impacts of calamities and disasters, ADMs and built-in flexibility in the curriculum helps keep children in school. The Department prescribes a total number of calendar days of contact time, at least 180 days. Schools are allowed to make up for lost days through remedial classes when the whole community is affected, such as during calamities. Students are also allowed to make up for the days that they missed if these are needed on an individual or group basis. Division superintendents are authorized to determine when to conduct remedial classes, if necessary. For individual students the ADMs help bring lessons where they are needed even outside the classroom. The programs, which include MISOSA, E-Impact and other similar ones currently running, all fall under the general rubric of ADMs. These are designed to help learners continue education through various modes if the traditional mode is untenable given individual constraints. One example of an expansion of ADMs is the *Kariton* classroom conceived and run by Efren Penaflorida's foundation, it catches streetchildren and helps bring them back into the system. Multigrade programs (such as BRAC) allow for catching all children regardless of grade level then putting them all in one classroom. It functions sometimes as a bridge program to let students to catch up before they are integrated back into a regular class. Alternative modes are used to address the unique challenges of bringing children in extraordinarily difficult situations into the school system, such as those who are affected by armed conflict, those in resettlement areas, and those who are a working.

Two important national policy developments happened in the past few years that address the recommendation to look at broader macro solutions to the problem of schooling among older children. First is the passage of the landmark RH Law, a policy that brings much-needed maternal and child health care, including family planning, to the populace. Its impact on education will take time, primarily through a reduction in growth rates of the total student body size, which in turn should result in better quality education and an overall lower rate of poverty. Second is an expansion of the 4Ps to extend support to children up to 18 years old. High school students have a higher likelihood of dropping out in part because the opportunity cost of them attending school has increased. Assistance for poor families with high school aged children would reduce the need to leave school for work. Moreover the extended program no longer requires exit from the 4Ps after five years but instead, after the (maximum) three children being supported by the program graduate from high school or reach 18 years old. These are major



revisions to the 4Ps that have the potential to increase school participation and in a few years, start increasing the incomes of poor families.

DepED corroborates studies that show positive impacts of the 4Ps program. Monitoring of the DSWD in schools show higher attendance rates among those receiving assistance. Data from APIS 2011 reveal higher net attendance rates. APIS estimates in 2008 and 2011 indicates not only that net attendance rates in all school age ranges increased, but that these increases were disproportionately higher among the poor households (bottom 40% by expenditure). This means that assistance to poor families are helping them “catch up” to the levels of schooling of the wealthier segments.

#### 4. 4. *Management, operations, and performance-based budgeting.*

A number of recommendations were made in relation to strengthening management and operations in the schools as well as building stronger accountability mechanisms through performance monitoring. These were made in light of findings that while in theory many of the school-based management principles, such as drilling down funds to schools, were being practiced, there were operational bottlenecks that needed attention. In particular the following recommendations were made:

- Prioritize the most acute shortages given resource constraints and rationalize allocations of inputs already available. Support full implementation of SBM, particularly reforms such as provision of MOOE budgets to principals and institutionalization of incentive systems that will allow stakeholders to exact accountability for poor performance. (21)
- Bring accessible learning facilities to all by prioritizing areas where additional resources are necessary, using multigrade systems to bring education to hard-to-reach areas, using ALS and ADMs to support communities without easy access to traditional schools. (24)
- Eliminate triple shifting in congested areas. When in double shifts, provide complementary inputs such as remedial lessons, at-home modules, or additional learning materials. (25)
- Coordinate with LGUs, private sector, or donor organizations on instructional needs of children in particular to support development of instructional materials, assisting in student assessment expenses, information materials for parents, and training of early-grade teachers. Ensure sustained investment in production of learning materials. (28, 29, 30, 46)
- Thorough and updated mapping of OOSC at the school and community levels are necessary to get the “last mile” students into the system. In general, capacity-building for data tracking, analysis, and research-based monitoring, evaluation, and policymaking is needed for regional and division offices. On evaluation and impact of policies, further research is necessary to link the effect of supple-side reforms on reducing school dropout rates and other OOSC-related indicators. (38, 43)
- Place strong accountability mechanisms on school officials for their performance in bringing high quality, complete, and accessible education to their students and the community. (39)

- Enhance managerial capacities of large schools and provide an incentive scheme based on management skills rather than seniority and credentialism (not related to managerial capacity). (41)
- Full support of SBM implementation in the following ways (a) MOOE to principals, (b) revise formula for grantee schools to factor in performance, needs, and capacity to absorb funds. (45)

The Philippine government has been introducing more effective mechanisms for performance-based budgeting. While the idea has been in place for years, the information inputs that allow its use were not systematically recorded, analyzed, and tracked. Budgets in the current process include performance information for government programs where departments/agencies have specific target outputs and expected performance standards in service delivery.<sup>9</sup> This system is reflected in the way DepED manages and operates today, and many of these systems have been in place many years, pre-dating this report, but improvements have been infused through from top to bottom on the operational details.

MOOE budgets have been fully drilled down to the principals and the overall MOOE budgets allocated per student has increased. In addition to the increase of the total MOOE budget, the formula has been changed from using solely the number of enrollees, to one that includes the number of teachers and number of facilities. These changes are slowly being incorporated and in the near future other factors will be included in the formula (e.g. classification of municipality). Schools received a substantial increase in 2015, after an 18.7% increase from 2014-2015. The bulk of the Department's whole MOOE budget goes to schools. The operational adjustments for schools have also been addressed. Whereas in the beginning of this reform principals were having a difficult time coping with the additional administrative demands of keeping track of spending and complying with the strict and tedious accounting and auditing rules attached to government funds, the Department now provides assistance on financial reporting. When schools have large budgets the problem shifts to absorptive capacity, these schools received additional finance personnel like bookkeepers to assist the principal. Whereas in previous years teachers were doing the bookkeeping for additional pay, now the goal is to move all such tasks to dedicated finance personnel.

Together, the linked systems of MOOE budget planning, school improvement plans (SIP), and reporting of certain performance measures are designed to allow tracking of school performance. SIPs are supposed to involve stakeholders, pushing principals to identify problems and come up with solutions. In theory, the Department has all the available data to carry out fairly detailed performance-based budgeting. The remaining steps include changing budgeting policies for school allocations to incorporate performance measures. The missing link is the NAT, results of which are given to schools and divisions so they can see how well they deliver the curriculum. However the NAT data at the school level is not currently included in the bigger input dataset of the DepED, the BEIS, and needs to be incorporated in order to do real analysis of inputs, outcomes, and performance. All this is necessary to complete the picture of performance-based budgeting.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://blog-pfm.imf.org/pfmblog/2013/09/the-philippines-leads-its-peers-in-performance-budgeting.html>

The mapping and tracking of OOSC, those in danger of dropping, and those who have transferred, no longer requires the cooperation of LGUs if the DepED is able to sustain and grow its new Learning Information System (LIS), which is in its early stages. The LIS is envisioned as a database to capture all students, their relevant data, and their movements through the education system. That is, a dropout in one school may turn up in a school in a different province the next year. Dropouts that do not return can be identified by name and profile, allowing schools better monitoring so they can get children back to school. It will also serve as input for budgeting, planning, teacher deployments, procurement of materials and all other manner of logistics for which student data are needed. Most importantly, it will provide more detailed data about student performance through tracking of grades and absences. This, in turn, would help the system identify students at risk of dropping out and provide preventive interventions. Currently the Department needs to do data processing and cleaning, but as a policy all public schools have to submit the data online, and in the near future all private schools will be required to do so as well. As of this writing the constraints are logistical on the side of storage. The database is large and will grow exponentially larger with additional variables and students reported, it must take into account the ICT backbone that would support it. Building on the LIS, the database can be of use to TESDA and CHED to track students beyond high school.

Sourcing outside funding, from private entities or SEF, for instructional materials can be improved. However the needs for TYPES of appropriate instructional materials may be much different with the new curriculum in place. Outside funding sources will be able to support procurement, but development must happen within DepED. With the implementation of learner-centered curricula and teaching in the mother tongue, the requirements for specialized instructional materials grew exponentially. In this area the approach of the Department has been to crowdsource the development of learning materials. They built a portal where DepED personnel can submit any learning materials they develop, submissions will be reviewed and certified by DepED and then made available to anybody within the Department for download and reproduction.

As for congestion in schools and specifically the problem of shifting, there are still many schools on double shifts, although triple shifts are getting more rare. The solution to this problem needs cooperation from local government units and possibly the private sector. Where there are triple shifts the root of the problem is distribution rather than absolute number of classrooms. It happens in the most congested urban areas, usually ones where there is limited land or a sudden influx of students (like in relocation communities). In small scale, there has been some success with busing students. Valenzuela City funded the busing system to decongest schools that were oversubscribed, bringing students to schools that have an excess number of classrooms. In urban areas the problem is limited land availability to build new schools. DepED cannot purchase lots; these are provided by the local governments or donated by private individuals. The Department, together with COA and perhaps DBM may have to find a way to use DepED money to purchase more land for schools. It is inevitable that urban areas will become more congested, thus, a long-term solution will have to be devised.

#### *4.5. Evaluation and monitoring of ADMs and ALS.*

Recommendations 35, 36 and 37 in the OOSC Report all refer in some way to systematic evaluation of ADMs and the ALS program. Alternative Delivery Modes (ADMs) are intended to catch students who have difficulties in the traditional modes. These include the MISOSA, e-IMPACT, home schooling, and dropout reduction program. DepED has consolidated the formerly separate and distinct programs into the general rubric of ADM, but all are intended to children who are in primary and secondary schools. ALS on the other hand is supposed to reach older youth, those already outside the school setting but did not complete the full education cycle. An Abot-Alam program for instance, attempts to capture the 15-30 year old set.

It remains unclear whether these programs are able to deliver on their objectives. There have been no fully completed systematic large-scale impact evaluations. In late 2014 the Bureau of ALS started conducting an impact study with World Bank support. The study will include a survey of all school divisions (except ARMM) and data is currently being analyzed.

With K-12 it is possible that the need for ADMs will be reduced dramatically. This is the ideal scenario of course, that the K-12 curriculum is sufficiently responsive that the system will no longer need too many different special interventions for children in difficult circumstances. However, this does not negate the need for rigorous evaluative study, it would help the Department decide on which programs should be kept, phased out, or scaled up. ALS should be considered a temporary stop-gap solution to OOSC, as the population of OOSC shrinks, the need for ALS shrinks as well.

### **5. Conclusion**

Without a doubt, the picture of basic education in the country has improved dramatically since 2010, when research for this report began. The incidence of OOSC has declined, gaps in school attendance between the rich and poor have narrowed, and shortages in inputs have been reduced substantially. All these were accomplished as a result and in spite of renewed demands on the system introduced by the adoption of a new curriculum that added a mandatory kindergarten year and two more years of high school. Data from the DepED are corroborated by data from the PSA (APIS household survey), both suggest remarkable rates of OOSC reduction over the last three years in primary and pre-primary ages. The “last mile” students, as the DepED refers to them, are those that are hardest to reach and have unique challenges. These are the last 4-5% of children in primary age, and the progress in reaching them will understandably be slower.

Participation rates in secondary school are more stubborn. Given where primary school attendance is at this time, the Department can turn its attention to high schools. The nature of secondary-aged OOSC is much different from that of primary-aged OOSC. For these older children, the opportunity cost of going to school is higher. The quality of secondary education is challenging because content is much more specialized, and keeping students in secondary schools motivated is probably harder. While in primary school, the problem was largely one of late entry, in secondary school the problem is dropout rates. The solution in primary age OOSC was bringing them into school, the solution for secondary aged OOSC must focus on how to keep them in. Research conducted for this report focused on primary schools, with less attention

to high schools. More detailed examinations of the OOSC phenomenon in high schools will help policymakers identify the most appropriate mechanisms. That said, the expansion of the 4Ps program to provide assistance to students all the way to the end of high school is a solid start, but government will also need to improve accessibility of high schools across the country, especially in the wake of the upcoming commencement of the senior high school system.

Where the DepED needs to invest more attention is in the problem of gender disparities, that of the underachievement of boys. The phenomenon is well documented, and in fact the BEIS and NAT scores are routinely reported disaggregated with sex-disaggregated statistics, with the gender parity rates calculated. All outcome measures in any subject in all grades indicate not just the male disadvantage, but also one that increases as the students grow older. While most of the recommendations we made in this report have been addressed in some way, all recommendations pertaining to affirmative action-type interventions for boys have not been taken up. It is understandable to have serious reservations about adopting policies that give extra points or incentives for boy students or teachers, however something must be done. At the very least, these policies may at least be adopted for a period of five years, while evidence is gathered on whether gender parity has been achieved. The improvements in OOSC rates show generally equal gains between boys and girls, this means that even while overall rates are higher, boys are still performing at a lower rate than girls. Now that the DepED has reached the last mile, it will have no choice but to face head-on, the problem of gender disparities. Unless it, along with the DSWD and other concerned agencies, can figure out how to keep boys in school, OOSC will be difficult to completely eradicate.

Before the current DepED administration ends, it is important to make a major push toward finishing and institutionalizing the Learner Information System (LIS) and all other data collection, archiving, and database projects currently in process. Having the base information management system in place will increase the likelihood that initiatives like research –based policies, performance-based budgeting, and systematic evaluation of special programs will continue under future leadership. Capacity-building for research-based planning and policy as well as engaging with research institutions are also necessary to properly leverage the wealth of data that the Department is collecting. The key is to build the data infrastructure and architecture tailor fit to the needs of various audiences inside and outside the DepED so that these can influence efficient and effective resource allocation in the service of higher quality education.

The government's decision to increase the budget of the DepED as part of its overall strategy of prioritizing social services is clearly paying off with growing evidence of considerably improved participation of children in basic education. In both size and as a proportion of the budget, these increases can and should continue since it appears that the Department has the capacity to absorb the funds and direct them toward the needed reforms to bring universal access to fruition. Basic education for all is getting to be more and more a reality. Now that the shortages are no longer the main story in basic education, the DepED can get out of its cycle of just trying to keep up with growing demand. This freedom from having to constantly address shortages will allow policymakers to spend time and effort on improving quality in a strategic manner and in keeping with the goals set out in the K-12 law that will prepare our youth to become holistically developed Filipinos with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

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