Philippine Education For All 2015: Implementation and Challenges

I. General Introduction

1. Filipinos have deep regard to for education. Education occupies a central place in Philippine political, economic social and cultural life. It has always been strongly viewed as a pillar of national development and a primary avenue for social and economic mobility.

2. A clear evidence of the value placed on education is the proportion of the national government budget going to the sector. The Department of Education (DepEd), the country's biggest bureaucracy[1], is given the highest budget allocation among government agencies each year as required by the 1987 Philippine Constitution.[2]

3. The 1987 Constitution likewise guarantees the right to education of every Filipino. It provided that, "The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make education accessible to all."
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4. The right of every Filipino to quality basic education is further emphasized in Republic Act 9155 or the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001. Along with Republic Act 6655 or the Free Secondary Education Act, these laws reaffirm the policy of the State to protect and promote the rights of all Filipinos by providing children free and compulsory education in the elementary and high school level. This pertains to six years of free tuition fees for children aged 6 to 11, and free four years of secondary schooling for those aged 12 to 15.

5. Along with "Education for All", the Philippines is also committed to pursue eight time-bound and specific targets under the Millennium Declaration which it signed on September 2000. The Declaration, in general, aims to reduce poverty by half in 2015 (22.65 percent proportion of the population below poverty incidence and 12.15 percent below subsistence incidence by 2015). With the adoption of the Declaration, the Philippines likewise affirmed its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) geared towards reducing poverty, hunger, diseases, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. These goals have been mainstreamed in the country's Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) 2004-2010 including policies and plans related to children, access to primary education and gender equality. Specifically, Part IV of the MTPDP focused on "Education and Youth Opportunity."

6. However, despite the legal mechanisms, budget prioritization and increased access, Philippine education has been dogged with issues. Among the issues that needs to be resolved but have improved lately include the high dropout rates, high number of repeaters, low passing grades, lack of particular language skills, failure to adequately respond and address the needs of people with special needs, overcrowded classrooms and poor teacher performances. These problems in turn resulted to a considerable number of illiterate Filipinos and out of school youths and graduates who are not prepared for work.

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[1] Allocation for basic education averages 85 percent of the total education budget according to an unpublished UN Country Report in 2008.
[2] Article XIV, Sec. 5, paragraph 5 of the Philippine Constitution.

A. Philippine Education Structure

7. The Philippine education system includes both formal and non-formal education. The formal education is a sequential progression of academic schooling at three levels: elementary (grade school), secondary (high school) and tertiary (college and graduate levels). By structure, Philippine education is categorized either as basic (preschool, elementary and high school) or tertiary (college, graduate and technical/vocational).

8. Basic education pertains to optional preschool at age 3 to 5, then six years of elementary schooling for aged 6 to 11, and four years of secondary schooling for aged 12 to 15. Excluding early childhood care and development (ECCD) or preschool, Philippine formal basic education subsystem is one of the shortest in the Asia Pacific with just 10 years of basic schooling compared with 11 to 12 years in other countries.

9. Basic education is being handled by the DepEd while college is under the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and vocational/technical and non-degree training under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), which is under the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). TESDA runs a variety of skills development centers throughout the country. Although being overseen by CHED, local colleges, however, are being operated by local governments as indicated in the local government code.

10. DepEd also handles the alternative learning system (ALS) for out-of-school youths and adults through its Bureau of Alternative Learning System (formerly Bureau of Non-formal Education). Islamic educational institutions or Madaris (plural of Madrasah) are also under the jurisdiction of DepEd, although most operate independently of each other and exist without passing through the standardization process. Most madaris are privately-owned and rely on the support of the local community or donors.

B. Overview on EFA

11. In 1990, there was a World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtiem, Thailand, which prescribed that Basic Learning Needs shall be met for all by various means. As a response, the Philippines crafted and implemented the 10-year EFA Philippine Plan of Action covering 1991-2000. The EFA plan articulated the country's national goals, objectives, policies and strategies, as well as the regional programs for implementation for the first decade of the EFA movement. Under the 1991-2000 Plan (EFA 1), the thrusts included:

   ❖ *Early Childhood Development*
   - Expansion of self-sustaining community-based ECCD
   - Use of innovative approaches to parent education
   - Promotion of preparatory education
   - Accreditation of private pre-school programs and institutions
   - Differentiated approaches for special categories of children
   - Strengthening of health, nutrition and other allied services
   - Socio-cultural adaptation of curriculum, materials and approaches
   - Single agency to coordinate programs for ECCD

- ❖ *Universalization of Quality Primary Education*
  - Enhancing the holding power or student retention of schools
  - Using alternative teaching-learning delivery modes
  - Strengthening home-school partnership
  - Emphasis on higher-level thinking skills
  - Upgrading teacher competencies

- ❖ *Alternative Learning Systems*
  - Eradication of illiteracy in selected areas
  - Promotion of continuing education and development
  - Implementation of integrated programs

12. In 2000, the Philippines, as a reaffirmation of the vision set in the 1990 World Declaration, committed itself to the following EFA 2015 Goals at the World Education Forum in Dakar:

    Goal 1: Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;

    Goal 2: Ensure that by 2015, all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;

    Goal 3: Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs;

    Goal 4: Achieve a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2105, especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;

    Goal 5: Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2015, with focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality; and

    Goal 6: Improve every aspect of the quality of education, and ensure their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

13. Based on the Dakar Framework for Action, the country came up with the Philippine EFA 2015 National Action Plan entitled "Functionally Literate Filipinos, An Educated Nation." Like what the MTPDP does to the economy, the current EFA is the overarching framework for basic education. The EFA 2015 Plan emphasizes the need to provide basic education for all and add a dimension to what has been thus far almost exclusively school-based education. It points to an "urgent need to respond to the learning needs of youth and adults who are either have never been to school, have dropped out, reverted to illiteracy, or need basic or advanced skills to find jobs." It suggests a "viable alternative learning system" to formal schooling that together with the schools can ensure that "minimum learning achievement will be a reality for all Filipinos." Thus, the EFA 2015 Plan emphasizes that educational opportunities are channels of learning which can become effective conduits of values

orientation, consciousness and information useful and relevant to a wide range of social goals.

14. Though the government officially approved the Philippine EFA 2015 Plan only in 2006, it was already used by the DepEd as its overall planning and policy framework as early as 2003 and was already integrated in the formulation and updating of the MTPDP 2001-04 and 2005-2010. Instead of six target dimensions as advanced by global EFA, the Philippines grouped them into four component objectives when it considered the local situation, all geared towards the overall goal of providing basic competencies to everyone to achieve functional literacy by 2015. This will be done through four component objectives (as against the six of global EFA), namely:
    a. Universal coverage of out-of-school youth and adults in the provision of learning needs;
    b. Universal school participation and total elimination of drop-outs and repetition in Grades 1 to 3;
    c. Universal completion of full cycle of basic education schooling with satisfactory achievement levels by all at every grade or year; and
    d. Commitment by all Philippine communities to the attainment of basic education competencies for all – Education for All by All.

15. To attain the above goals, nine urgent and critical tasks were formulated. The six production tasks will hopefully yield the desired educational outcomes while the three enabling tasks will be necessary to sustain effective implementation of the production aspects. These tasks are enumerated below:

    ❖   *Production Tasks*
        a. Better Schools: Make every school continuously perform better;
        b. Early Childhood Care and Development: Make expansion of coverage yield more EFA benefits;
        c. Alternative Learning System: Transform non-formal and informal interventions into an alternative learning system yielding more EFA benefits;
        d. Teachers: Promote practice of high quality teaching;
        e. Longer Cycle: Adopt a 12-year program for formal basic education - Two more years added, one each for elementary and high school, to the existing 10-year basic education schooling;
        f. Accelerate articulation, enrichment and development of the basic education curriculum in the context of the pillars of new functional literacy;

    ❖   *Enabling Task*
        g. Funding: Provide adequate and stable public funding for country-wide attainment of EFA goals. Adoption of funding framework for basic education that combines the national and local government funding to support the most cost-effective local efforts to attain quality outcomes in every locality across the whole country;
        h. Governance: Create a network of community-based groups for local attainment of EFA goals. A knowledge-based movement which reach, engage and organize persons in each locality to form a nationwide network of multi-sectoral groups advocating and supporting attainment of EFA goals in their respective localities; and

i. Monitor progress in efforts towards attainment of EFA goals. Of particular importance is the development and implementation of indicators of "quality education".

C. Policies, Programs and Projects to achieve EFA targets

Governance and Finance

16. The Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 (Republic Act 9155) provides the legal basis for the decentralization of basic education management and governance to the level closest to the learners – the school and community. The DepEd started the adoption of policy on Principal Empowerment in mid-1990s when some of the administrative and instructional supervision functions of the divisions were delegated to school heads. The said reform produced improved learning outcomes in several schools as a result of delegating some decision-making functions to the principals. However, this development was short-lived and not sustained in some schools. When the empowered school heads were assigned to other areas, the capabilities of the entire school system had not yet been fully developed, thus it had not been able to sustain whatever improvements started.

17. Projects were also implemented to build the capacities of the different levels, particularly the schools and the division offices. DepEd implemented the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) and the Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project. Both projects were financed through loans from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC). These projects covered the identified poorest provinces nationwide under the government's Social Reform Agenda. Specific support provided to the schools and divisions under the two projects were for the implementation of school-based management (i.e., training on the preparation and implementation of a school Improvement plan, resource mobilization and management) and putting in place a decentralized basic education management system at the division level. The projects also supported initiatives to build the capacity of the division office in strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation and financial management.

18. The Third Elementary Education Project piloted the direct provision of school-based resources, especially to selected elementary schools. At present, only a few public elementary schools are directly receiving their maintenance and other operating expenses allocation from the national government. DepEd's current policy is for the Schools Division Superintendents to decide whether to release the budget to elementary schools either in cash or in kind. In most cases, schools receive their respective allocation in kind which may not even be the items they actually need. On the other hand, majority of the public secondary schools are directly receiving their allocation from the national government through their own school accounts.

19. Regional offices were not included when the TEEP started in the mid-90s, because at that time there was no clear policy on the specific roles of the regional offices insofar as decentralization is concerned. There was even a proposal to dissolve the regional offices. RA 9155, however, specifically provides that the main function of the regional offices is quality assurance. They are mandated to monitor and evaluate the performance of all schools within their jurisdiction and provide technical support to divisions and selected schools which are lagging behind in key outcome indicators. Together with the project Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM), the

TEEP and the Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project provided interventions that aim to develop and strengthen the capacity of the regional offices as the "inspectorates" of the entire DepEd system.

20. The support of the TEEP, Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project and BEAM paved the way for the application of School-Based Management in a number of schools nationwide as well as the strengthening of basic education management systems in selected divisions. But full decentralization has yet to effect. Systemic approach is called for so that the whole DepEd, including the regional and central offices will be supportive of the reform. Currently, the capacity of the entire DepEd system to support full decentralization is perceived to be weak as it still lacks human, material and financial resources to push the implementation of School-Based Management on a larger scale and eventually cover all public schools nationwide. Right now, the challenge is how to expand the EFA networks at the sub-national and local levels.

21. In terms of financing EFA, worth noting is the substantial contributions of other basic education stakeholders in implementing various basic education programs/projects/initiatives. The Special Education Fund of the LGUs and the resources of the private sector through the Adopt-A-School Program are making a difference in terms of improving learning outcomes in selected schools. However, there is still much to be desired in the appropriate use of resources, particularly the Special Education Fund as a big portion is allocated to fund non-academic activities.

Early Childhood Education
22. The increasing gross enrolment rate in early childhood education programs by both public and private schools in recent years can be attributed to the implementation of the Early Childhood Care and Development Act or Republic Act No. 8980. Signed on December 5, 2000, the law is considered a landmark in the country's education history as it provides the national policy that institutionalizes an integrated and comprehensive system of early childhood care and development. It also serves as the blueprint for the country's entire program for children 0 to 6 years old. The policy takes on a holistic approach to bring about optimum development of children through convergence of health, nutrition, psychosocial stimulation and early education programs and services aimed at giving children good health and nutrition, appropriate early education, love and protection from harm at home, center and in the school. The law also mandates the establishment of coordinating mechanisms at the national and local levels to ensure sustained multi-sectoral collaboration. This is a significant shift from the earlier piecemeal or fragmented delivery of ECCD services.

23. The implementation of ECCD program is cost-shared between the provincial or city government and the Council for the Welfare of Children which also functions as the national coordinating council in partnership with local governments and their respective Early Childhood Care and Development Coordinating Committees.

24. Services and activities funded by the ECCD program include:
Service delivery
- Upgrading or expansion of day care centers and barangay health centers
- Provision of equipment, supplies and learning materials for the centers
- Immunization of pregnant mothers

- Micronutrient supplementation for mothers and children
- Provision of essential drugs and medicines
- Supplemental feeding which includes de-worming
- Nutrition education and parent education
- Growth monitoring and promotion
- Livelihood assistance for parents of children in day care and supplemental feeding program

Capability building activities
- For day care workers on the Revised Day Care Manual, Early Childhood Care and Development Checklist and on preschool curriculum for 5-year olds
- For Grade 1 teachers on 8-week Early Childhood Education Curriculum and use of the School Readiness Assessment Tool
- For social workers on the Revised Day Care Manual, Parent Effectiveness Service, preschool curriculum and Pabasa sa Nutrisyon (Nutrition Education)
- For health service providers on Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses, Pabasa sa Nutrisyon, International Reference Standard and on Food Always in the Home

Data Bank for Early Childhood Care and Development
- Provision of hardware, software, training (14 regions, 17 provinces and 7 municipalities)

Monitoring and Evaluation
- Program implementation review once a year
- Quarterly on-site monitoring (if necessary)
- Monthly & quarterly financial and physical accomplishment

25. Since 2000, the achievements on ECCD program include the following:
- Commitment and support of local governments and under the cost-sharing scheme ownership by LGUs is evident;
- Mainstreaming of ECCD in local development and investment plans for children;
- Strong partnerships among different agencies through the ECCD Coordinating Committee. In most cases the involvement of local NGOs and the private sector is evident;
- Formulation and adoption of national policies and local ordinances supporting the implementation of ECCD;
- Headway in convergence of ECCD programs, projects and activities;
- Active involvement and participation of ECCD service providers (health, nutrition, education, social welfare, etc.); and
- Pilot-testing of home or community-based Early Childhood Education to expand coverage especially for those aged 3 to 4 years old.

26. Because of the country's ECCD initiatives, the Philippines became one of the six countries[3] selected under the joint UNICEF and Columbia University project entitled *Going Global with Early Learning Standards and Development* which aims to meet the current gap in assessing and monitoring children's early development. The primary goal of the project was for the six countries to develop nationally acceptable

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[3] Aside from the Philippines, the five other countries are Brazil, Ghana, Jordan, Paraguay and South Africa

learning and development standards that could be used in several different ways to improve the lives of young children.

27. To attain the set targets on early childhood education, partnership and networking with other government agencies, LGUs, NGOs and the private sector was deemed a necessary strategy. Gains along this line include the following:
   - Partnership with the Philippine Pediatric Society was forged. A joint project called *Kalusugan ng Kabataan Ating Kinabukasan* (children's health is our future) aims to: (a) pilot-test a family-centered, community-based approach to address the development and health needs of children 0 to 19 years old; and (b) develop a system for early identification, referral and intervention for children with disabilities. Pilot areas are Tagum City, Davao del Norte (Region XI); Taisan, Batangas (Region IV-A); and Tacloban City (Region VIII).
   - The "School-in-a-Box" concept for the poorest and most in-need barangays were developed by the Anak Natin Foundation, Inc. The concept contains a complete set of required teaching materials for the day care worker and learning materials for 3 to 5 year olds.

28. In research, 17 early childhood development researches under the five-year Early Childhood Development Project were funded by the ADB and World Bank. The recommendations from these studies are now being applied by DepEd, DOH and the DSWD. A baseline survey was conducted on the first batch of areas where the ECCD Law was first implemented. The coverage of the study included determining the status of children (their nutrition, health and child development) and knowledge, attitudes and practice of parents, local governments and service providers (day care workers, barangay health workers and Grade 1 teachers) on ECCD.

29. As of December 2006, the ECCD law coverage has reached 77 provinces and 29 cities in varying stages. Overall, local governments have been very committed to the law's implementation under the cost-sharing scheme.

30. Pre-school education for 5 years old is the focus of the DepEd's initiatives on early childhood education. For this, three major strategies were put in place namely: a) strengthening the formal system of pre-school delivery; b) implementation and expansion of the pre-school service contracting scheme; and c) implementation of the 8-Week Early Childhood Education in Grade 1.

   - Strengthening the formal system of pre-school delivery. A curriculum was designed to maximize the child's potential and capacities for learning focusing on five areas of child development specifically: a) physical development – activities such as play and games aimed at gross and fine motor coordination; b) personal and social development – the child is guided towards greater independence and better social behaviors, such as following rules and routines, and health habits; c) affective development – this includes experiences that help children develop love for God, self, others and community; d) cognitive development – this area focuses on the development of communication skills and sensory-perceptual and numeracy concepts and skills; e) creative-aesthetic development.

     Under Executive Order 349, an inter-agency effort by the DSWD, DepEd, and the Council for the Welfare of Children rolled out the initial implementation of the National Pre-School Education Program using the curriculum described above.

Preschool classes were opened in 11 regions, in 30 provinces, covering 87 cities and municipalities belonging to the 4th to 6th class. Following the mandate of Republic Act 8980, the Parent-Teachers-Community Associations have initiated establishment of preschools, mostly inside the compounds of public elementary schools. Right now, the LGU-assisted preschools exist mostly in Metro Manila. DepEd has established preschool classes in the 21 economically disadvantaged provinces identified under the Social Reform Agenda as priority areas. As a start, DepEd has created position items for pre-school teachers. To date, there are 714 regular teachers handling 1,428 classes. Each teacher works with two classes.

- Implementing the Preschool Service Contracting Program. This strategy utilizes an alternative delivery system aimed at providing early childhood experiences to prospective Grade 1 children in the 5th and 6th class municipalities, urban slums and relocation areas that are neither accommodated in the Parent-Teachers-Community Associations-initiated preschools nor in the day care centers. The children are instead placed in private pre-schools and church-based early learning centers registered with the DepEd. Other qualified service providers are colleges and universities offering education course and NGOs with education mandate. The amount of Php300 per child per month is paid to the service provider for the salary of teachers, instructional materials and administrative costs.

- Providing Early Childhood Education Exposure to all Incoming Grade 1 Students. Since 40 percent of the Grade 1 entrants did not have early childhood education experience, DepEd introduced the 8-Week Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Grade 1 as a stop gap measure. This was institutionalized through Order No.10 series 2004. This is a major policy requiring all Grade 1 to have preschool experience, including those in selected Day Care Centers for 5 years old using the DepEd pre-school curriculum. The curriculum has been aligned with the Basic Education Curriculum and has become an integral part of the Grade 1 curriculum. The first 8 weeks in Grade 1 are devoted to the physical and psycho-social preparation of young children for the rigors of formal schooling. The skills developed in the different learning areas will be the basis for marking the first grading period. Related to this, DepEd also endorsed to the CHED Order No. 10 to incorporate early childhood education in pre-service education as a key step to prepare future teachers in Grade 1 for integration of early childhood education in the curriculum.

Formal Basic Education

31. To increase access to quality, relevant and efficient formal primary education, the country has introduced and implemented innovations and reforms in the curriculum, testing and assessment, teacher development, school improvement and alternative delivery modes.

   a. *Pursuit of Quality through Curricular Reforms*. The curriculum is the heart of the educational system.. In 1999, the policy direction was for decongesting the curriculum. That led to the formulation of the Basic Education Curriculum for the elementary level and the Restructured Basic Education Curriculum for the secondary level. The number of learning areas in both levels was reduced to five, focusing on those that facilitate lifelong learning skills. The implementation of the curriculum

included training of teachers and administrators, development of modules and training materials, and close monitoring and assessment of program implementation.

The policy of indigenization of the curriculum led to development of localized curriculum materials that took into account local culture. In school year 2005-2006, the Standard Curriculum for Elementary Public Schools and Private Madaris was implemented. The curriculum upholds the country's commitment to provide quality education opportunity to all children, irrespective of their race, color, religion or culture. The curriculum development was aimed at (1) establishing a smooth transfer of pupils/students from public to private Madrasah or vice versa; (2) unifying the long history of dichotomy among Muslims; and (3) promoting the Filipino national identity and at the same time preserving the Muslim's cultural heritage.

A vital part of the restructured curriculum is the promotion of the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in every learning area. DepEd, through its Computerization Program, provided computers and peripherals to recipient public high schools nationwide. Other government agencies like the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), local governments, and private firms such as Intel likewise contributed to the advancement of computer education in public elementary and high schools through donations of computers.

b.   Quality Assurance Strategies through Testing and Assessment. A new student assessment scheme was introduced in school year 2002-2003. It included a diagnostic test administered to Grade IV pupils at the start of the school year to determine learning gaps. The test results served as the basis for implementing remedial measures within the school year. Achievement tests are administered to the same group of pupils at the end of the school year to determine progress in learning, specifically for Grade VI and Fourth Year high schools students.

Responding to the need for a comprehensive assessment and evaluation system that truly reflects students' performance, the use of transmutation tables to convert raw test scores to grades was discarded in 2003 and was replaced by the Performance-Based Grading System. The new grading system, designed to truly reflect student performance raised the passing mark and mastery level to 75 from 70 and redesigned the content of the examination. Distribution of test items categorized as easy, medium-level difficulty and difficult is 60, 30 and 10 percent, respectively. The new grading system is a way of making teachers pay attention to what they teach their students and ensure that students achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Reading skills are a major concern of the educational system.   Through the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), the reading proficiency level of elementary pupils is assessed and evaluated. Results of the pre-test serve as the basis for implementing interventions for children below the standard reading level. The remedial program, Every Child a Reader Program utilizes the Phil-IRI to assess the results of the program. The Phil-IRI standards were adapted from comparisons of several international reading inventories and from the results of the recent national reading achievement test.

At the high school level, incoming first year students are given the High School Readiness Test to assess whether or not they have mastered the basic competencies of the elementary curriculum. The results have not been encouraging.

More than 90 percent of the elementary graduates failed the test. Students who failed the test are asked to take the High School Bridge Program. It is a one-year remediation program in language, mathematics and science. Evaluation of the Bridge Program indicated a significant improvement in the achievement level of those enrolled in the program.

c. *Quality Improvement through School-wide Reforms*. Following MTPDP's provision that "educational quality improvement shall originate from the school and redound to its own benefit and that of the community", DepEd implemented policies recognizing that educational services are best managed and delivered at the school level with community and local government support. In 1999, DepEd through Order No. 230 started the implementation of School-Based Management to support the realization of the country's educational goals and objectives on (1) basic education as a right; (2) access to, equity in and improved quality of basic education; (3) improving learning outcomes; and (4) community and local government engagement.

Another reform is the Accreditation Program for Public Elementary Schools. Implemented in 2003 as a voluntary evaluation system designed to challenge all public elementary schools to improve the efficiency of the system and raise their standards through objective self-evaluation based on the agreed upon standards. Public secondary schools have an accreditation system similar to that of the elementary schools called Project Sterling Silver.

d. *Quality Improvement through Teacher Development Programs.* Teachers are considered the most important input to basic education, thus, a major determinant of student achievement. The following were the major teacher development-related initiatives by DepEd in partnership with other basic education stakeholders:

- *Teacher Education and Development Program* is a two-stream package of long-term policy reforms and immediate program reforms in teacher education. Financing will be sought through government allocation and from Official Development Assistance. The program has been progressively revised since it was first conceived in 1999. In a nutshell, the program has been initiated to advocate a stronger formal partnership between the CHED/Teacher Education Institutions and DepEd Public Schools for the improvement of both pre-service and in-service teacher education.

- *National English Proficiency Program* is a training program to improve the English proficiency of elementary and secondary level teachers and administrators. It complements the Every Child a Reader Program. It was implemented on June 2003 in compliance with Executive Order 210 mandating the use of the English language as the primary medium of instruction in all public and private schools.

- *Project on Strengthening the Support System for School-based INSET Institutionalization.* The Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC) is supportive of continuous development of administrators, teachers and non-teaching personnel. It supported the training of school heads, district and division supervisors in performing their respective roles in monitoring the conduct of school-based in-service training and providing instructional supervision of teachers.

▪ *Increasing the Number of Teaching Positions Yearly*. In 2006 alone, 10,000 positions were created. On the hiring, deployment and promotion of teachers, a policy that promotes competency-based hiring has been promulgated and shared with local governments. Entitled New Guidelines on Recruitment, Evaluation, Selection and Appointment of Teachers in Public Schools, the policy seeks to implement uniform hiring standards.

e. *Sector-Wide Strategies to Improve Access, Equity, Quality and Efficiency.* School resources including classrooms, desks/armchairs, computers, textbooks, teachers, principals, school operating expenses and other instructional equipment/materials are critical in making teaching-learning more effective. They help improve access and educational efficiency since students are less likely to be absent from schools that provide space and resources for them.

From the national budget, the education sub-sector consistently gets the highest allocation in line with the government's commitment to provide free and compulsory elementary education and free secondary education. However, a big portion of the budget goes to personal services (salaries and allowances of teachers and non-teaching staff) thus leaving very little for developmental activities and maintenance and operating expenses.

To augment the budget, DepEd taps other sources such as the local governments' Special Education Fund collected from 1 percent of the real estate tax, congressional support by convincing members of Congress to view educational assistance as an alternative way of using their Priority Development Assistance Fund, private support and from aid agencies such as World Bank, ADB, JBIC, AUSAID,, JICA and UNICEF. During the EFA mid-decade implementation period, the Third Elementary Education Project and the Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project were implemented in 26 provinces identified as among the poorest in the country.

Another means of augmenting school maintenance resources is the National Schools Maintenance Week, also known as Brigada Eskwela (School Brigade), launched on May 2003. The program capitalizes on the "bayanihan" (voluntarism) spirit, where people in the community including the LGUs, local business and concerned citizens/parties help in the repair, maintenance, beautification and refurbishing of schools. Donations come in the form of cash, free labor and construction materials.

Other national agencies also extend support to the education sector. The Department of Labor and Employment, for instance, used the framework from the Adopt-A-School Program and the model provided by the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce, Inc. to solicit support for the basic education sector from the overseas Filipino community. Adopt-a-School Program, formalized by Republic Act 8525, is DepEd's vehicle in mobilizing support from the private and non-government sectors. Based on a menu of assistance packages developed, interested companies sponsor certain school programs/projects. Through a program initiated by DTI, a city, municipality or province can contract a loan from the National Development Corporation (NDC) for the construction of school buildings.

Procurement of school resources averages about P28 billion yearly. The reforms have significantly succeeded in instituting competition, efficiency and transparency in procurement operations, particularly for nationally supplied school resources (e.g., textbooks, classrooms and school desks). In addition, the Textbook Delivery Program helped DepEd forge close collaboration with other government organizations, NGOs and the private sector nationwide to perform quality control checks on the goods delivered particularly textbooks at the school and district office level. DepEd moved for a single-title adoption for every textbook supplied in every classroom and in every grade/year level to permit uniform learning among pupils. This policy shift is being implemented initially through a Textbook Exchange Program between schools, districts and divisions, and will eventually be realized through the procurement of a single type of textbook per subject for all grade/year levels every five years.

f.   *Policies, Programs and Projects that Promote Access.* In ensuring that every community has access to quality basic education services and recognizing that physical factors affect the decision of households to send children to school, Schools for School-less Barangays was launched in 2001 to establish public elementary and secondary schools in 1,617 barangays identified to be without one. This is in addition to the regular school building program of DepEd, Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and other government agencies, and local government units to construct an adequate number of classrooms in areas with acute need or shortages.

The country also benefits from the grants and loan programs of local and international development agencies. For instance, under the Little Red School House Project of the Coca-Cola Foundation Philippines Inc., 50 three-room elementary school buildings were built for selected multi-grade schools within a span of five years. Under the Educational Facilities Improvement Project (Phase VI) of Japan's Grant-In Aid Program, 441 elementary schools in selected regions will be constructed. The Third Elementary Education Project, jointly financed by a 10-year loan from the World Bank and the JBIC, has built 4,649 new classrooms and repaired/rehabilitated 12,991 existing ones. The Federation of Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Inc. had constructed 452 new classrooms and the project "Classroom Galing sa Mamamayang Pilipino Abroad" has built 285 classrooms. Both projects put up schools for the secondary level.

g.   *Alternative Delivery Modes that Promote Access and Holding Power of School.* To strengthen the holding power of the schools, *Project EASE* (Effective Alternative Secondary Education) was implemented for students who cannot attend class regularly due to personal, economic or financial reasons. It was intended to complement the existing formal system to make secondary education more accessible to students in disadvantaged situations. An EASE student can enter into a contract with the school to study at home for a period of time until he/she is ready to return to the formal system. Learning is facilitated with the use of modules as instructional materials during the period when they are out of the classroom.

For those who are unable to start or complete secondary education due to lack of time, distance, physical impairment or financial difficulties and for those living in areas of conflict, the *Open High School Program* was designed and implemented. The system is learner-centered and makes use of a wide range of teaching-learning strategies through a combination of print and non-print media. This is complemented

with the implementation of *Balik Paaralan Program* (Home Study Program). Learning is primarily a self-activity and is achieved only when the curricular program, instructional materials and delivery system are adjusted to the needs of the learner who cannot, for one reason or another, regularly go to school. At the elementary level, Project IMPACT, a combination of self-learning materials and an in-school, off-school mode, continues to be implemented in some regions as a way of reaching the hard-to-reach students and circumventing limited school resources.

Alternative Learning Systems

32. The Medium Term Philippine Development Plan 2001-2004 guided the implementation of alternative learning systems in the country to allow flexible entry of learners in both formal and non-formal/informal streams of basic education and ensure their upward social mobility. More importantly, it is expected to demonstrate the social and economic viability of non-school-based learning channels.

33. In 2004, DepEd's Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE) was renamed as Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS) by virtue of Executive Order No. 356. This is to respond to the need of a more systematic and flexible approach in reaching all types of learners outside the formal school system. As such, it carries a redefined mandate which strengthens the bureau's function to ensure that all learning needs of marginalized learners are addressed for them to function effectively as citizens. The BALS then shall be regarded as an equal partner of the formal system in the delivery of basic education. Some of the projects initiated include Indigenous Peoples Education Program, Balik-Paaralan Para Sa Out-of-School Adult, Family Basic Literacy Program, and Mobile Literacy Program. The priority areas are determined based on the following information: (i) school data showing schools at risk based on dropout rates, participation rates and retention rates; (2) 500 Strong Republic Schools of barangays identified by the Office of the President; and (3) 5th and 6th class municipalities surveyed by the DILG.

34. For ALS, DepEd considers as initial gains the establishment of the Alternative Learning System Service Provider Accreditation System by BALS and the Non-Formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency System which is a program that enables those who got an elementary education level equivalency after taking the test to be mainstreamed back in formal schools or to continue to a higher level program under the alternative learning system. Those who got secondary education level equivalency are either proceeding to higher education or to any technical-vocational schools provided that they pass the entrance examination.

35. Like the formal basic education system, the ALS curriculum has five learning areas, namely: i) communication skills (including listening, speaking, reading and writing from print and electronic media); ii) problem solving and critical thinking (numeracy and scientific thinking); iii) sustainable use of resources and productivity (including ability to earn a living as an employed or self-employed person, sustainable resources and productivity); iv) development of self and a sense of community (a sense of personal and national history and identity, cultural pride and recognition and understanding of civil and political rights); and v) expanding one's world vision (knowledge, respect and appreciation for diversity, peace and non-violent resolution of conflicts, and global awareness and solidarity).

36. Learners under the Alternative Learning System are assessed and profiled to determine appropriate level and learning interventions. After due assessment, learners are classified as Basic Level, Continuing Education (elementary and secondary levels) or Lifelong Learning (post secondary onwards) learners. Together with other stakeholders, they are actively involved in determining the course agreements regarding specific objectives, curriculum and schedules (time, frequency and duration of sessions) of the learning groups being formed.

37. After completing the Basic Literacy Program, a Certificate signed by the DepEd Secretary is issued to the graduates as counterpart of the diploma in the formal education system. Learners who wish to have their non-formal and informal learnings accredited may take the Accreditation and Equivalency Test, which was developed by the Bureau of Nonformal Education (BNFE) under an ADB-assisted project. The test, administered once a year is similar to the achievement tests given in formal education. The test provides an alternative means of certification of learning for Filipinos and foreigners aged 15 years old and above, who are basically literate, are unable to avail of the formal school system, or who have dropped out of the formal elementary and secondary schools. Learners who pass the test will be mainstreamed back to the formal basic education system, to higher education or any technical-vocational school provided they pass the entrance examination.

38. The alternative learning programs are implemented by non-formal education mobile teachers, literacy facilitators and instructional managers. They are preferably qualified teachers with adequate training in andragogy and special approaches for effectively facilitating learning and managing learners development through alternative schemes. They are also regularly evaluated and upgraded to ensure quality of teaching services.

39. Alternative learning materials are produced in print and non-print in various formats (e.g., poster, booklet, flip chart, comics, leaflets, games, videos, audio tapes and others). The selection, development and use of materials are guided by the alternative learning curriculum that has been customized for the intended users. These are bilingual and trilingual (native or vernacular tongue, Filipino and English) and were developed by adequately trained writers using the active participatory methodology. These learning materials are self-paced, self-instructional, indigenous and integrated modules.

40. ALS programs are delivered in community learning centers using various modes such as face-to-face, group learning, family or household approach, individual tutorial and others. An ICT component is being tested using the radio-based approach where learning modules are aired in selected provinces. The programs are either implemented by staff (through mobile teachers) or contracted to private service providers.

41. Given the limited budget for ALS (less than 1 percent of the total budget), it would be impossible for DepEd to address the said problem alone. One of the key strategies being adopted is the use of alternative financing schemes like partnerships between local governments and the private sector to cover the cost of teacher programs, instructional materials, school buildings and facilities. The government also engaged NGOs in the implementation of community-based literacy programs outside the formal school system.

42. Lifelong learning is a learning progression beginning at birth and ending only with death which encompasses both the formal and alternative learning systems. Together with the UNESCO advocated concept of life skills, the Philippine notion of functional literacy now approximates the idea of "real life literacy."

43. As a learning outcome, literacy is a set of skills that are applied and utilized by a person within a particular community and cultural context which benefits not only the individual but the entire society (UNESCO 2005). Such skills enable them to take advantage of economic opportunities to respond to their basic needs and contribute in the development activities. As a means according to Woodhall (1987), the provision of literacy generates the basic ability to learn that is vital to the innovative development process. Literacy is an enabling instrument that is vital in realizing the potential of persons as individuals and as members of the community, in promoting respect within the society and in protecting not only themselves but also their natural environment (UNESCO 2005). The greater attention that the Philippine government continues to afford basic education is based on the premise that alongside widened access to basic education, the functionality and productivity of the Filipino people increases.

44. Lifelong learning in the Philippines is directly linked with the EFA goals by way of the new concept of Quality of Education-Anchored on Functionality. Specifically, among the proposed activities of the Philippine EFA 2015 Plan is the future assessment for quality assurance of basic education anchored on the concept of functionality.

45. Functionality, as conveyed by the new definition of functional literacy, is equated with the notions of life skills/lifelong learning rooted in the four pillars of education articulated by the Delors Commission.[4] These pillars are: *learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be.* The new definition is to be translated and/or operationalized by the five strands of indicators as follows: *(1) communication skills; (2) problem solving and critical thinking; (3) sustainable use of resources/productivity; (4) development of self and sense of community; and (5) expanding one's world vision.* These five strands have been anchored on the four pillars of education that should be imbibed by all nations and education systems in the 21st century. These also serve as the definition's philosophical underpinning.

46. With functional literacy, the Philippine wishes to evolve a powerful social indicator, both qualitative and quantitative, that can be used in overall development, particularly in social/human development planning. This kind of assessment is capable of revealing not only the desirable social outcomes of basic learning of a cross-section of the nation's population. It is also a key single descriptor of the demographic characteristics of the nation and on expression of a number of important social development implications.

47. The assessment, in line with EFA's Basic Learning Needs, must be able to look into the learning opportunities availed not only by those who attend schools but also even by those who do not, making it a significant social-educational measurement tool. Such assessments should yield results that would give a picture of not only the Filipinos' capacity or potential to survive and develop themselves but also realities

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[4] *Delors, Jacques. Learning: The Treasure Within (Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education)*

that are suggestive of the direction in which society can improve the delivery of Basic Learning Needs by examining the efficiency of the formal education subsystem, on the one hand, and the effectiveness and outreach of non-formal education and other non-school learning channels, on the other.

II. Implementing Framework
A. Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP)

48. The MTPDP (2004-2010) is the country's blueprint for growth and development and for breaking the vicious cycle of poverty. It consists of five parts with Part IV focusing on Education and Youth. Specific targets were identified to improve the efficiency of the basic education system and enhance teaching-learning processes and skills for competitiveness. The targets were: a) to establish an elementary school in every barangay; b) expand access to secondary level, particularly for hard-to-reach populations; and c) improve the school holding capacity and quality of education.

49. The strategies identified to achieve the MTPDP targets on basic education are as follows:

   a. *Support Systems for Basic Education*. To push for the implementation of School-Based Management, the functions of national and sub-national levels will be re-aligned and the roles of local governments, civil society, community and the private sector in the delivery and management of basic education services will be broadened.

   b. *Development and Welfare of Teachers.* Teachers' competencies will be enhanced through a unified program of pre-service and in-service teacher training which will be more school-based and demand-driven. A two-track career path for teachers will be mapped out.

   c. *Internal Efficiency of Primary Education.* Family-focused interventions and special programs such as compensatory teaching, home-based learning, school feeding and health care will be intensified in cooperation with families and communities. The Early Childhood Care and Development Law (Republic Act 8980 of 2000) will be implemented to facilitate inter-agency collaboration including partnerships with the private sector and local governments in the delivery of service at the community level.

   d. *External Efficiency of Schools.* The school guidance program will be strengthened to ensure that secondary school graduates will be prepared for either employment or higher education.

   e. *Progressive Curricular Reforms.* Teaching-learning processes will be made more learner-centered; indigenization of learning materials will be encouraged; teaching-learning approaches will be aligned with science and mathematics curricula to advance the subjects' quality. A vital part of the restructured curriculum is the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in every learning area.

   f. *System of Assessment and Testing.* The system of assessing student performance will be unified and will cover a more comprehensive and culturally

sensitive way of measuring learners' performance. Currently, a diagnostic test is administered to Grade IV pupils at the start of the school year to determine learning gaps. The National Elementary Assessment Test is administered to Grade VI pupils in both public and private schools to determine learning outcomes. At the high school level, in-coming First Year students are given the High School Readiness Test which assesses the mastery of the basic competencies of the elementary curriculum.

g. *Backlogs in the School System.* Provision of basic inputs such as facilities, instructional materials and adequately trained teachers will be improved.

h. *Alternative Learning System.* Gains made in the completed Non-Formal Education Project will be expanded and institutionalized. Expansion will be in terms of learning scope, assessment methodologies and the accreditation and equivalency system developed by the Project.

B. Millennium Development Goals

50. The Philippines, along with 191 member states of the United Nations, signed the Millennium Declaration in September 2000. It made commitments to pursue eight time-bound and specific targets under the Declaration, which in general, aim to reduce poverty by half in 2015 (22.65 percent proportion of the population below poverty incidence and 12.15 percent below subsistence incidence by 2015).

51. With the adoption of the Declaration, the Philippines as a member state likewise affirmed its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals geared towards reducing poverty, hunger, diseases, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. It consists of 8 goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators that are periodically monitored at the international and country levels based on a timeline set to last until 2015. The goals are time-bound and measurable. The goals have been mainstreamed in the MTPDP 2004-2010 including policies and plans related to children, access to primary education and gender equality.

C. Education for All

52. Anchored on the Dakar Framework for Action on EFA and following the heels of the Philippine EFA 2000 Plan, the country came up with the Philippine EFA 2015 National Action Plan. Like what the MTPDP does to the economy, the current EFA is the overarching framework for basic education. It was guided by a review of previous studies, similar undertakings and a series of consultations with various stakeholders. Technical Working Groups, each covering a major area of concern such as: Early Childhood Care and Development; Formal Education; Alternative Learning System; Governance; and Financing were formed to help in the crafting of the EFA 2015 Plan.

53. The EFA 2015 Plan emphasizes the need to provide basic education for all and add a dimension to what has been thus far almost exclusively school-based education. It points to an "*urgent need to respond to the learning needs of youth and adults are either have never been to school, have dropped out, reverted to illiteracy, or need basic or advanced skills to find jobs.*" It suggests a "viable alternative learning system" to formal schooling that together with the schools can ensure that "minimum learning achievement will be a reality for all Filipinos." Thus, the EFA 2015 Plan emphasizes that educational opportunities are channels of learning which can

become effective conduits of values orientation, consciousness and information useful and relevant to a wide range of social goals.

54. The Department of Education started the planning process for EFA 2015 Plan in 2002 and it took three years to complete. A DepEd undersecretary served as EFA National Coordinator for the multi-sectoral technical working group working on the plan. The delay in the completion and adoption of the Plan did not hinder the country from continuously implementing programs, projects and initiatives that are supportive of the EFA goals and targets. Through the long and extensive planning process, the partnership among the different basic education stakeholders was expanded and strengthened.

55. *From 2000-2005.* Before the official adoption of the Philippine EFA 2015 Plan, the existing Social Development Committee (SDC) lodged at the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) was used as the structure and mechanism to engage various sectors in the discussion of EFA-related concerns at the policy and program levels. The Committee is composed of various government agencies in-charge of the social sector, including education. The limitation of the said structure is the non-representation of local governments, NGOs and civil society organizations. At the sub-national levels, the Regional Development Council-Social Development Committee (RDC-SDC) is the regional counterpart while the Local Schools Boards at the provincial, city and municipal levels are the structure that served as the EFA forum. The Local Schools Boards also serve as an advisory committee to the LGU on educational matters such as the use of local appropriations and to determine the annual supplementary budget for basic education within their locality.

56. *From 2006 onwards.* After the completion of the Philippine EFA 2015 Plan, the country adopted a new EFA structure for better coordination and implementation. The current National EFA Committee is chaired by the Secretary of Education and co-chaired by the Education Network represented by members from the civil society. The National EFA Committee has the following functions: a) national coordination; b) policy-making; c) social mobilization and advocacy; d) resource mobilization; e) preparation/ updating of annual national targets; f) monitoring and evaluation and; g) overseeing the creation and operation of sub-national alliances. Backstopping the Committee is the National EFA Secretariat.

57. Other members of the Committee include the CHED, TESDA, DOH, DSWD, NEDA, Basic Education Committees of Congress (Senate and House of Representatives), Council for the Welfare of Children, Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), DOLE, Department of Science and Technology (DOST), National Anti-Poverty Council (NAPC), National Youth Council (NYC), Office of Muslim Affairs (OMA), Philippine Information Agency (PIA), Southeast ASEAN Ministers of Education Center for Innovation Technology (SEAMEO-INNOTECH), Union of Local Authorities in the Philippines (ULAP), and the UN Commission in the Philippines. A Memorandum of Agreement was executed to obtain the commitment of each partner agency which stipulates each one's roles and responsibilities in attaining the EFA goals and targets.

58. One of the urgent and critical tasks of the Philippine Education For All 2015 Plan is the continuous monitoring and assessment of the country's progress in the

attainment of the EFA goals and targets and the efforts of various stakeholders to implement EFA. The results of the monitoring and evaluation exercise will be used for policy reformulation; planning and programming; and program/project redesigning at different levels. As articulated in the BESRA Program Implementation Plan (2006 version), one of the priority areas is the establishment of a quality assurance and accountability framework. The DepEd initiated the following to achieve this objective:

a. Formulation and validation of the Sector Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. This will be used as basis for tracking progress in attaining the EFA goals and targets and in monitoring the contributions of stakeholders (DepEd, other government agencies, LGUs, NGOs and the private sector) to EFA implementation;

b. Revision of DepEd's Organizational Performance Indicator Framework to capture recent developments and emerging priorities in the Department which are not reflected in the BESRA (i.e., technical and vocational education). The Framework is being promoted for use by government agencies to determine priority expenditures, assess accomplishments, identify targets and report results; and

c. Organization and initial training of Regional and Division EFA Monitoring and Evaluation Teams in 17 regions and 187 divisions nationwide. The major function of the teams is to conduct system monitoring and evaluation at their respective levels to aid planning, policy reformulation, project designing and implementation, and continuous assessment of the progress and gaps in the attainment of the goals and targets set in the EFA 2015 Plan. The initial training conducted by DepEd was on basic principles and tools on monitoring and evaluation. Major outputs of the training were the draft Regional EFA Assessment Reports covering the period 2000-2005 which served as inputs to the Country EFA Mid-Decade Assessment Exercise. Aside from the global EFA Mid-Decade Assessment guidelines, the country used the Sector Monitoring and Evaluation Framework as its guide.

59. The Philippine EFA Mid-Decade Assessment is responding to both the monitoring and evaluation thrusts of the country as well as the Global EFA Movement. The global report provides a chart showing how countries around the world are measured against four criteria: universal primary education, adult literacy, the quality of education and gender parity. Unesco reported that steady progress has been made in all criteria but the pace may not be sufficient for the EFA goals to be met by 2015 especially in many African countries.

60. Thus the assessment exercise is to gauge the progress the country has so far made in its commitments. The assessment exercise is part of the regular activities of the DepEd and is coordinated by the National EFA Secretariat which is an organic unit in DepEd. The review process started from the initial capacity-building of DepEd Regional and Division monitoring and evaluation teams. The process adopted the "learning by doing" approach to build the monitoring and evaluation capabilities of the organizational staff. Subsequently, the DepEd consolidated the regional reports and came-up with the Consolidated EFA Assessment Report which covers mainly its services/programs/projects and their outcomes.

61. The assessment process involved other members of the National EFA Committee to capture the contributions of other basic education stakeholders in the implementation of EFA. The Council for the Welfare of Children which is the secretariat of the Early Childhood Care and Development Council is mainly responsible for analyzing the performance of the Early Childhood Education sub-sector, particularly the status of services for 3-4 years old children. The Education Network, on the other hand, contributed to the analysis of the Alternative Learning System and undertook a Case Study on the Children Working in a Sugar Cane Hacienda in Sipalay, Negros Occidental. DepEd tapped partner donors to accelerate the preparation and finalization of the report. UNICEF provided financial assistance for regional, national, sub-national consultations and validation workshops. The final draft of the Assessment Report is then presented to the National EFA Committee for final review and endorsement to the NEDA–Social Development Committee, Cabinet Level for approval.

III. Overall Country Performance and Progress

Overall EFA Goal

62. The Philippines missed most of its key EFA 2005 targets as improvements have been very minimal. Some indicators even suffered regression. For instance, the net enrolment rate in the elementary sector was already at a high 96.77 percent in 2000 but fell to 90.10 percent the following year and further decreased to 84.44 percent in 2005 which is way off the target of 92.19. Drop out rate has been increasing despite efforts to expand early childhood education programs, thus there are now more students unable to complete the full 10 years of basic education. The Philippine Midterm Progress Report on the Millennium Development Goals remarked that the country is lagging behind the targets of achieving access to primary education as measured by net enrolment rate, cohort survival rate and completion rate.

63. This suggests that the country should intensify its efforts to ensure that it will recover lost ground so that the Education for All targets will be met by 2015. There are previous comments that the targets might be unrealistic given the time frame, and that poverty must be addressed first as fundamental issue in education, something which is not exactly easy to do. Poverty motivates children to search for income-generating activities resulting in frequent non-attendance in school. This makes them lag in their schoolwork and consequently lead to their marginalization in school and subsequent dropping out. The lack of resources should also entice the wider use of nontraditional methods particularly the alternative delivery modes in formal basic education and informal systems.

64. On the positive side, data for 2006-2008 suggest a modest improvement in some indicators after the shortcomings in 2005. For instance, the completion rate in elementary and secondary levels and the Gross Enrollment Rate in early childhood education increased.

65. The Philippine EFA 2015 Plan aims to provide basic competencies for everyone to achieve higher functional literacy by all in 2015. To measure the country's overall performance in basic education, the government through the National Statistics Office (NSO) periodically administers the Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS)[5]. The FLEMMS is a national survey that gathers information on basic and functional literacy, the educational skills and qualifications and exposure of the population to mass media. The survey is conducted to complement the existing school data of DepEd that will be used as basis of education policies and programs. It should be noted that the result of the 2003 FLEMMS, particularly the level of functional literacy, is not comparable with the 2005 target set in the Philippine EFA 2015 Plan as it used the old definition of functional literacy. The table below shows the country's 2005 functional literacy targets by age group using the new definition of Functional Literacy (*Box 1).*

Table 1. Functional Literacy Targets for 2005, 2010 and 2015

Age Group	2005		Overall	2010	2015
	Male	**Female**			
10 – 64	82.01	86.41	84.21		
15 – 29	No target set	No target set	90.86	91.06	91.26
15 and above	No target set	No target set	84.15		

Box 1. Literacy Definition
Basic or Simple Literacy is the ability of a person to read and write with understanding of simple message in any language or dialect.   *Functional Literacy* is a range of skills and competencies – cognitive*, affective**, and behavioral – which enable individuals to: • Live and work as human persons;   • Develop their potential;   • Make critical and informed decisions;   • Functions effectively in society within the context of their environment and that of the wider community (local, regional, national, global)   All in order to improve the quality of their life and that of society.   **Operational Definition of Functional literacy** – is the ability to communicate effectively, solve problems scientifically, think critically and creatively, use resources sustainably and be productive. To develop one's sense of community and to expand one's world view.   *cognitive-intellectual   **affective-emotional

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[5] The Philippines has much earlier blazed the trail of measuring functionality through the implementation of FLEMMS, the first-ever literacy survey, which was initiated in 1989 and was last undertaken in 2003.

Functional Literacy

66. From 1994 to 2002, there was only 0.3 percent improvement in functional literacy rate from the 1994 rate of 83.8 percent. From 2003 to 2005, however, there was a significant improvement of 7.16 percent, functional literacy in 2003 being 84.1 percent. Of the estimated 57.6 million Filipinos who are 10 to 64 years old, around 3.8 million do not know how to read and write, and a total of 9.2 million were not functionally literate or unable to compute and lacked numeracy skills. The functional literacy rate among females was higher than males.

67. In terms of functional literacy level by age group, those aged 20-24 years old attained the highest rate with 91 percent followed by the 15-19 and 25-29 age groups with rates of 88.8 percent and 88.4 percent, respectively. The age groups of 10-14, 50-59 and 60-64 all posted functional literacy rates of less than 80 percent (*Figure 1*). One possible explanation for the higher rates of the 15-29 age bracket is that they also have the highest exposure to mass media including the Internet therefore they are the most functionally literate. Also with higher educational attainment, it is expected that they have higher literacy levels as well.

Figure 1. Functional Literacy Rates, By Age Group, National Level
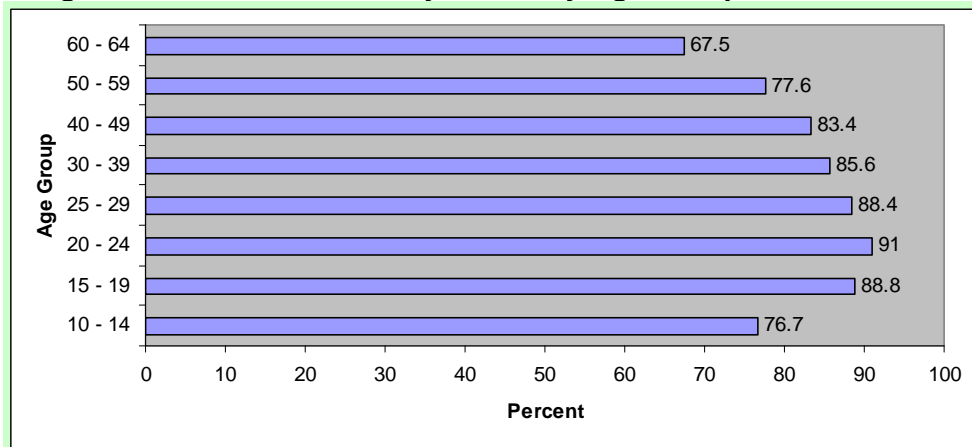
Source: 2003 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey

Basic Literacy

68. In 2003, 93.4 percent or about 58 million were basically literate (*Figure 2*). This figure is slightly lower than the 1994 rate of 94 percent. The basic literacy rate among females (94.3 percent) was higher compared with their male counterparts (92.6 percent).

Figure 2. Basic National Literacy Rate of 10-year olds and over (2003)
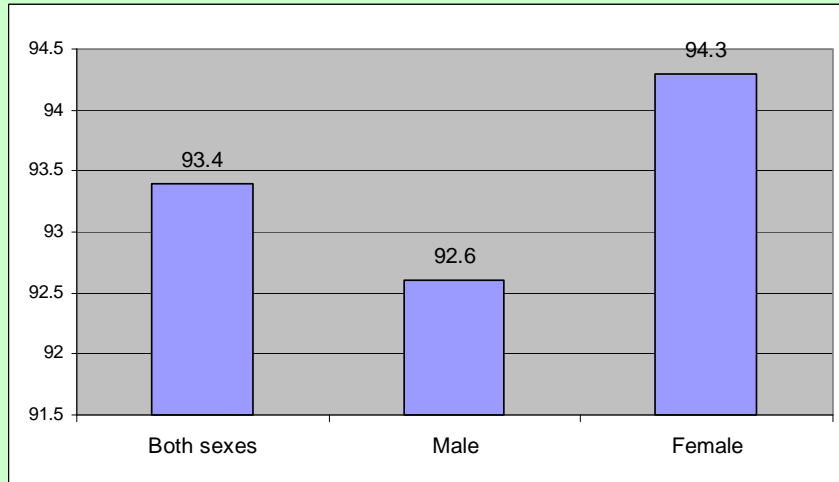
69. While the country's basic literacy rate seems high as it reached the 90 percent mark in both the 1994 and 2003 surveys, the absolute number of illiterate Filipinos was still significant, about 4.1 million in 2003 (*Table 2*). The basically illiterate Filipinos in age groups 10-19 and 20 over were estimated to be at 0.8 million and 3.2 million, respectively. These illiterate youth and adults should have been covered in the literacy programs and initiatives of various stakeholders under the alternative learning systems.

Table 2. Number of Basically Illiterate Filipinos, 10 Years Old and Over National Level (in thousand)

Age Group	Population	Illiteracy Rate	Number
TOTAL (Philippines)	61,964	6.6	4,090
10-14	9,692	5.3	514
15-19	8,690	3.3	287
20-24	7,676	3.6	276
25-29	6,595	4.8	317
30-39	11,349	6.1	692
40-49	8,132	7.2	586
50-59	4,901	10.7	524
60 and over	4,929	17.8	877
Total (10-19)			800
Total (15 and over)			3559
Total (20 and over)			3272

Source: 2003 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey

70. The country aims that all persons beyond school-age, who have failed to acquire the essential competence to be functionally literate, should be made functionally literate in their native dialect, in Filipino and English. This is aligned with Goal 3 of the World EFA to "ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills program."

Box 2. Definition of Youth
The United Nations defines adolescents as individuals between 10-19 years old. The World Health Organization suggests that adolescents may also include individuals up to 24 years old. The Philippines Republic Act No. 8044 (Youth in Nation Building Act) defines youth namely those who are 15-30 years old. Many government and private agencies prefer 24 years old as the upper limit. Presidential Decree 603 defines youth as persons below 21 years old. The National Framework for Youth Development classified youth based on the following categories: Youth child – 15-17 years old Core Youth – 18-24 years old Young Adult – 25-30 years old

71. One of the country's urgent tasks in order to attain the objective above is to transform non-formal and informal interventions into an alternative learning system yielding more EFA benefits. The first and most urgent step is to make fully functionally literate the core population of adults and youth outside schools who do not as yet possess essential functional literacy. The actions required for this include: a) the national government finances the integration of alternative learning options as an essential and routine part of every public, private and civil society socio-economic development initiatives and make them available to disadvantaged persons and communities; and b) adult literacy organizations work more closely with organizations already involved in community development and poverty alleviation.

72. DepEd implemented two major non-formal education programs: (i) the Basic Literacy Program which offers community-based learning for illiterate youth and adults to develop basic literacy skills; and (ii) the Accreditation and Equivalency Program for literates who have not completed 10 years of basic education. It is a certification of learning for out-of-school youth and adults aged 15 years old and above who are unable to avail of formal schooling or who have dropped out of formal elementary or secondary education. These programs are delivered through the Literacy Service Contracting Scheme and Learning Support Delivery System, respectively, which contract the services of partner agencies, e.g. local government, state colleges, church-based organizations, peoples' organization and NGOs. On account of the country's strong espousal of alternative learning systems through its effective

Accreditation an Equivalency System, it was recognized by the global community in Jomtien and by UNESCO by bestowing it the NOMA Literacy Prize.

Box 3. UNESCO NOMA Literacy Prize

The Philippines was the recipient of UNESCO's Noma Literacy Prize for its ADB-funded Philippine Non-formal Education Project which is benefiting some 600,000 mainly rural people from 24 provinces. UNESCO cited the project as a pioneering effort to address poverty by empowering the poor and illiterate. The project supports the government's efforts to make basic education available and accessible to the poor, through innovative delivery systems.

The award recognizes the Accreditation and Equivalency System, an important component of the project that enables adults and out-of-school youths to obtain certificates for elementary and secondary education outside the formal school system.

"With the high quality of the program, the government recently recognized graduates of the Accreditation and Equivalency program as eligible for being recruited into the public service and for enrolling in vocational training and college and university courses," says Thamrongsak Moenjak, ADB Senior Project Specialist.

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73. As earlier cited, there were about 3.56 million Filipinos aged 15 years old and above who could not read and write. Among the age group of 16-24 years old with a population of more than 16 million, only 34 percent are in school. About 60 percent (some 9.4 million) were not in school and not attending any alternative learning system program, while another 6 percent of the said age group was not in school but were able to attend different types of alternative learning system programs (*Figure 2*). Of those who attended some form of alternative learning system program, only 256,690 were covered by the Literacy Service Contracting Scheme of DepEd's Bureau of Alternative Learning System. The others were covered by local governments, NGOs and other government agencies implementing community development programs with basic literacy classes.

Figure 2. Percent of 16-24 Years Old In School and Out-Of-School National Level: 2003 FLEMMS

- In-School — 34%
- Not in School but attending ALS — 6%
- Not in School but not attending ALS — 60%
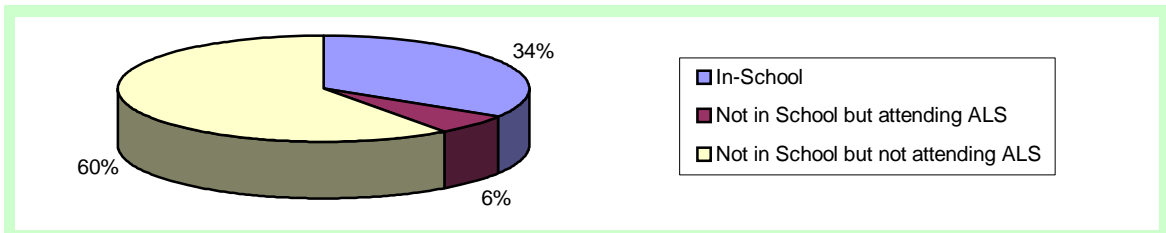
74. Worse, not all of those who enrolled in the program were able to finish studying the modules. At the national level, the average completion rate of Literacy Service Contracting Scheme learners from 2000-2005 was 82.6 percent only (*Table 3*).

Table 3. Completion Rate in Literacy Service Contracting Scheme (in percent)

YEAR	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Average
National Level	80	85	87	68	91	85	82.6

75. The low participation rate in the alternative learning programs is further confirmed in *Figure 3* where the least attended non-formal education or alternative learning system programs for 15 years old and above were Basic Literacy Classes (2.2 percent), Functional Literacy (4.6 percent), and Basic vocational training (6.2 percent) programs. Livelihood Training was the most attended with 43.2 percent implying priority for meeting basic economic needs.

Figure 3. Percent of 15 Years Old and Over Who Attended Livelihood Adult Literacy Program or Non-Formal Training by Type of Training (2003 FLEMMS)
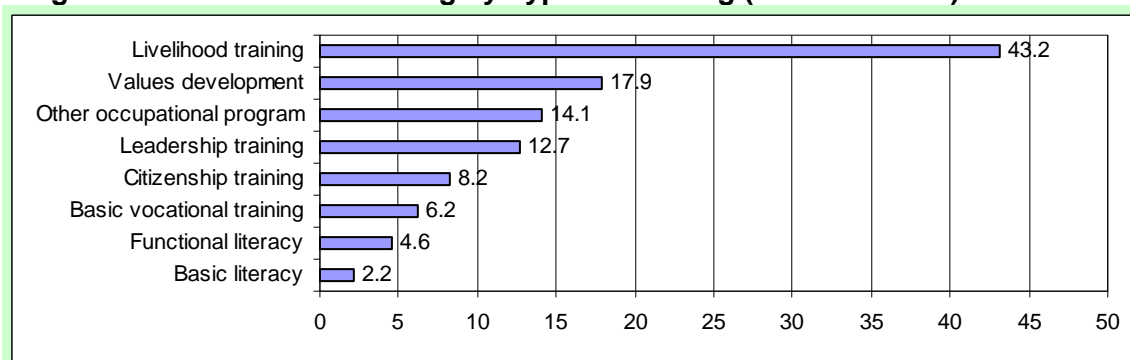
76. To assess the performance of the learners and competencies gained from informal and non-formal education, DepEd developed the Accreditation and Equivalency Program. This program is intended for literates who have not completed 10 years of basic education. It has a testing and assessment component which assesses the competencies of the learners and issues certification of their level of competency. The 2003 to 2005 results of the said assessment both at the elementary and secondary levels are presented in *Table 4*.

Table 4. National Accreditation and Equivalency Passing Rate, By Level, By Year

CY	2003		2004		2005	
National	*Elem*	*Sec*	*Elem*	*Sec*	*Elem*	*Sec*
	13%	13%	19%	14%	24%	18%

77. Based on the above, the passing rate of the Accreditation and Equivalency test is far from desirable. The passing rate ranges only from 13 to 24 percent at the elementary level and 13 to 19 percent at the secondary level. This means that less than 2 in every 10 Accreditation and Equivalency test takers actually pass the exam.[6]

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[6] However, no available data actually show that these test passers are the beneficiaries of Accreditation and Equivalency Program of the Department of Education

78. Moreover, many of those who pass the exams are "walk-in" test takers, not necessarily the learners who underwent the Accreditation and Equivalency Programs. These walk-in test takers are sometimes drop-outs from formal basic education who take the Accreditation and Equivalency test to gain an educational qualification comparable to that of the formal system[7] as an alternative to taking the Philippine Education Placement Test and to returning to formal schooling in order for them to gain entry in higher education. These walk-in test takers are, as observed, those who have easy access to the testing centers and who, reside in urban areas. These learners have greater exposure to various mass media as source of knowledge and information which might be contributory to enabling them to pass the Accreditation and Equivalency test more easily than those who are less exposed to mass media and those in far-flung areas.

79. The very limited coverage of alternative learning programs (aside from the issue on quality of these programs) clearly suggest the need to further expand initiatives to provide illiterate Filipinos with basic learning needs. Thus, DepEd should fast-track the introduction of methodology that will incorporate basic and functional literacy programs in the community development initiatives of other government agencies such as the DA, DENR, Departments of Agrarian Reform, Health, and Social Welfare and Development. Moreover, alternative learning system-related efforts of local governments and NGOs should also be strengthened and intensified to help address the illiteracy of Filipino youths and adults.

80. In 2007, the percent of completers in ALS modes and test passers in the Accreditation and Equivalency test was almost or equivalent to the targets set for 2008 and 2009.

Table 5. Percent of Completers in ALS and Test Passers in Accreditation and Equivalency, 2005-07

Indicator	Level	Actual			Targets	
		FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009
Alternative Learning System	No. of Learners	132,745	134,697	147,138	312,400	312,400
	No. of Completers	94,076	96,851	110,354	237,889	237,889
	% Completers	71	72	75	76	76
Accreditation and Equivalency	No. of Test Takers	45,339	51,979	100,543	71,880	71,880
	No. of Test Passers	9,930	12,425	29,008	20,787	20,787
	% Test Passers	22	24	29	29	29

Objective 2:
Universal School Participation and Elimination of Drop-Outs and Repetition in the First Three Grades (World EFA Goals 1 and 2)

81. The country aims to ensure that all children aged six should enter school. But it is important that they are ready to learn and are prepared to achieve the required competencies for Grades 1 to 3. To make them ready, quality assured programs for pre-school and early childhood care and development should be expanded to reach

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[7] DepEd Memo No. 101, series of 2001, "Agreement Between the Department of Education, Culture and Sports and the Commission of Higher Education on the NFE A&E Secondary Level Certificate Holders"

all children aged 3 to 5 years old, with first priority for children least likely to enter school, most likely to drop-out or repeat in Grades 1 to 3. These programs provide access for young children to existing health, nutrition, psychosocial stimulation and early learning opportunities by drawing on various governmental, non-governmental and community resources.

82. This program corresponds to the two goals of the World EFA: a) expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children (Goal 1); and b) ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality (Goal 2).

Expansion of Access to Quality Early Childhood Education Services
83. Early childhood education has become the determinant of performance in Grade 1 in the formal school system as children with early educational experience perform better than those without. Also, the high incidence of dropout in Grade 1 is attributed to lack of pre-school experience of Grade 1 entrants, among other factors. While the country started ECCD programs in the 1990s, the EFA 2000 Assessment noted that the expanded coverage of the program has not significantly improved participation, retention and achievement rates of Grades 1 to 3 pupils. There is a general lack of awareness and appreciation of the importance of early childhood education among parents.

84. In response, the country has set new targets related to the availability of early childhood education services such as those offered by private day care centers or those run by local governments, and public pre-schools supervised and managed by the DepEd, as well as embarked on stronger partnerships, information campaign and training. *Table 6* shows the 2005 EFA - Early Childhood Education Targets and Actual Accomplishments.

Table 6. 2005 Early Childhood Education Targets

Early Childhood Education Indicators	2002 Baseline	2005 Target
1. Percentage of Barangays with Day Care Centers (DCCs)		
a) Overall (Baselines: 32,370 DCCs)	77.00	85.00
b) Percentage of Accredited DCCs (Baseline: 23,665 DCCs)	47.60	70.00
c) Percentage of Accredited Day Care Workers (Baseline: 23,610 Day Care Workers)	48.00	70.00
2. Percentage of Barangays with Pre-Schools		
a) Overall Percentage	20.93	34.11
b) Percentage of Registered Pre-Schools		
- Public	19.65	47.00
- Private	12.72	41.00
2. Gross Enrolment Rate		
a) Overall GER in all ECE Program		
- 3 to 4 years old (DCCs)	19.60	30.00
- 5 year old (pre-school)	60.00	70.00
Day Care Centers	23.00	No target set
Public Pre-School	09.86	10.55

Private Pre-School	37.00	No target set
b) GER in Accredited ECE Programs/Providers		
- 3 to 4 years old (DCCs)	06.30	30.00
- 5 year old (pre-school)	10.30	No target set
Day Care Centers		30.00
Public Pre-School		No target set
Private Pre-School		No target set

Establishment of Day Care Centers and Preschools in Every Barangay

85. The public day care system which is managed and supervised by the local governments is the largest provider of early childhood care and development services for 3-5 year old Filipino children. Day care centers are designed to provide supplemental parenting care to children especially of working mothers during part of the day. A center can accommodate 30 children at a time with morning and afternoon sessions (doubling its capacity to 60). Day care activities include supervised play and group activities (arts and crafts, music and movement, storytelling), personal hygiene, supplemental feeding, health and nutrition education, experiences for socialization and early learning.

86. The total number of day care centers nationwide in 2005 is 45,433 with some barangays having more than one, while a few barangays remain unserved. In 2005, about 81 percent (32,112) of the country's barangays had day care centers, up from 2002 figures of 78 percent (31,464) of the barangays. However, this is 4 percentage points short of the 2005 target of 85 percent barangays with day care centers. Also, a number of barangays need to add more day care centers due to the sheer number of children especially in densely populated areas or remoteness of some communities to the center of the barangay. Furthermore, the quality of services provided in preschools and day care centers varies according to curricula.

87. While there is a law requiring the establishment of a day care center in every barangay (Republic Act 6972), the government has not yet to unravel the problem of access to day care centers. Large scale expansion has been realized through the establishment of privately run day care centers that are operated by NGOs and private entrepreneurs. However, the proliferation of day care centers is posing another problem: quality. In response, the DSWD formulated standards/criteria for accrediting day care centers. Of the number of day care centers in 2005, 27,864 (70.51 percent) were accredited. This is up from just 16,130 (47 percent) in 2002 (*Table 7*).

Table 7. Number and Percentage of Barangays with Day Care Centers (With and Without Accreditation), National Level: 2002-2005

	2002 (Baseline)	2003 (Actual)	2004 (Actual)	2005 (Actual)	2005 Target
No. of Brgy with DCCs	31,464 (78%)	31,595 (79.17%)	32,295 (81.73%)	32,112 (81.26%)	85%
With Accreditation	16,130 (39.84%)	23,665 (59.30%)	29,590 (51.62%)	27,864 (70.51%)	
Without Accreditation	15,150	11,302		11,499	

	(37.42%)	(28.32%)		(25.09%)	
Total No. of Brgys.	40,302	39,907	39,516	39,516	

88. Other alternative forms of day care service include: (i) *child minding centers* such as those in some government offices, private firms and business establishments which provide workplace-based centers for children of their employees; (ii) *family day care* which is being implemented on a pilot-scale where a group of 2 to 4 kids under three years old are provided a stimulating environment in the home of a trained day care mother or caregiver; and (iii) *supervised neighborhood play which* is designed as a way of building on informal children's peer groups to develop stimulating settings for socialization and early learning. However, implementation of supervised neighborhood play remains on a limited scale. For disadvantaged children, the DSWD has the community-/home-based early childhood education programs to cover children in difficult/different situations. There is also the Pre-School Service Contracting Scheme which prioritizes preschool children not accommodated in public and private pre-schools and day care centers.

89. With regards to 5 year olds, the government has continued to provide additional resources to the DepEd for the establishment of pre-school classes within the existing public elementary schools. This resulted in an increase in the number of public pre-elementary classes from 8,265 in 2002 to 10,655 in 2005 as shown in *Figure 4*. The private sector has also expanded its early childhood education services particularly in urban areas.

Figure 4. Number of Government Pre-Elementary Schools, 2002-2005
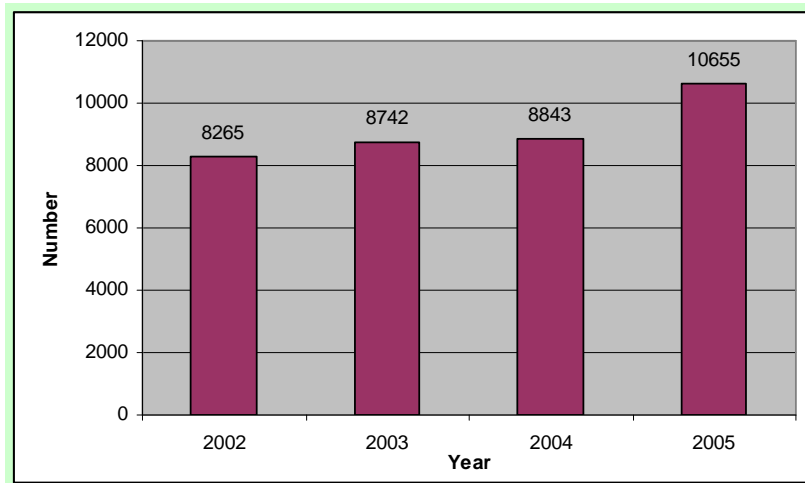
90. While there was significant increase in the number of barangays with day care centers and the number of public elementary schools with pre-school classes, this was not translated into significant increase in Gross Enrolment Rate[8] to attain the 2005 target of 30 percent. The country has only achieved a Gross Enrolment Rate of 20.5 percent (*Figure 5*).

Figure 5. Gross Enrolment Rate in Early Childhood Education, SY 1999-2000 to SY 2005-2006
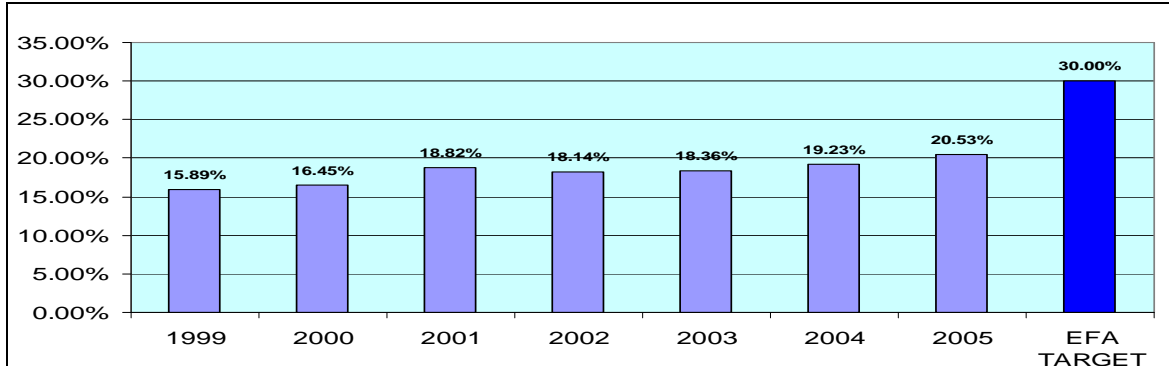
91. From 2005 to 2007, gross enrollment rate in ECCD programs of most regions show promising results. However, while most regions in Mindanao have improved gross enrollment except for ARMM, these pull down the national ECCD GER to 21.54 percent.

92. In terms of coverage of early childhood education services per age group, parents tend to perceive early schooling as school preparation program and send only older children to preschools. Hence, while 60 percent of the 5 year-olds availed of Early Childhood Care and Development Centers services, only 19.6 percent of the 3-4 years old children did so as parents find ways how to take care of their children in their own homes (*Figure 6*).

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[8] Gross Enrolment Rate measures the general level of participation of young children in early childhood education programs. It indicates the capacity of the education system to prepare children for elementary education.

Figure 6. Access of 3-5 Years Old Children to ECCD Services
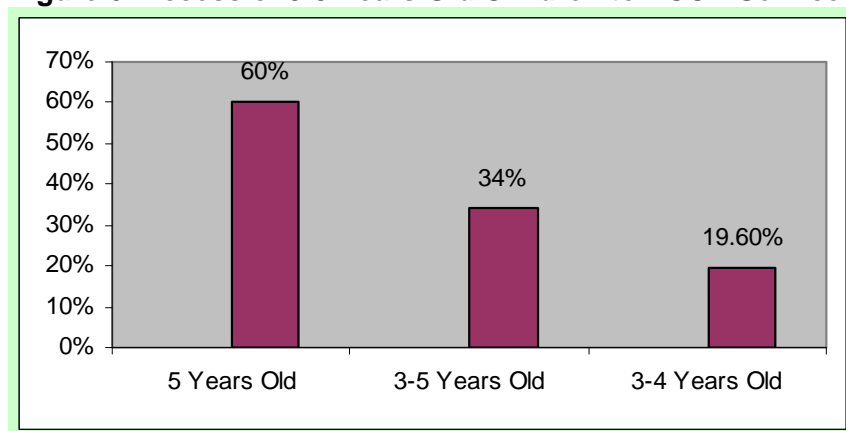
Grade 1 Entrants with Early Childhood Education Experience and Their Readiness

93. The increasing Gross Enrolment Rate in early childhood education and coverage of 4-5 years old in pre-school education have resulted in an increase in percentage of Grade 1 entrants with early childhood education experience from 2002 to 2005. However, the country's performance of 60.68 percent is way below the 2005 target of 67 percent *(Figure 7)*. It must be noted also that both the actual 2005 figure and the EFA target are lower than the 70.58 percent already achieved in 2000. To provide early childhood education interventions to those who do not have such experience prior to Grade 1, the DepEd introduced the 8-week Early Childhood Education Curriculum in Grade 1 through DepEd Order No. 10 series 2004.

Figure 7. Percentage of New Entrants in Grade 1 with ECE Experience in School Year 1999-2000 to School Year 2005-2006
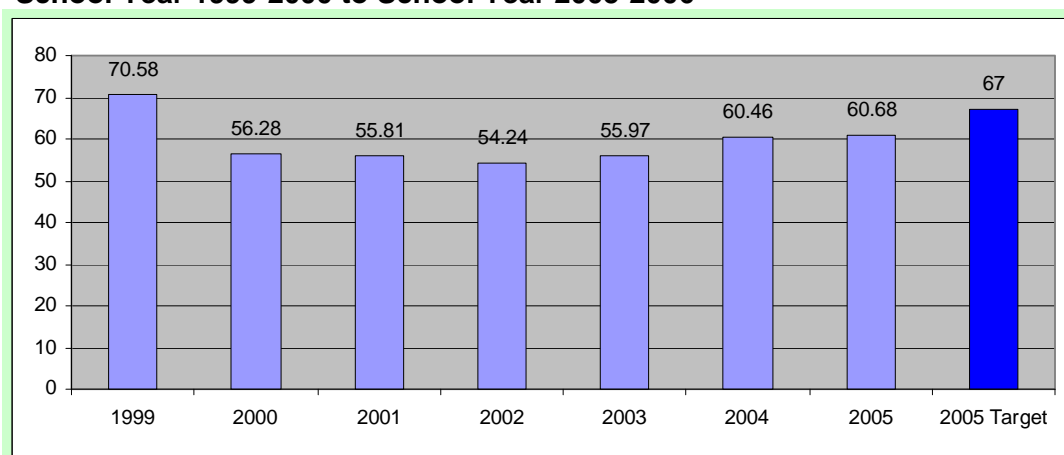
94. To determine the readiness of Grade 1 entrants to face the rigors of formal schooling, DepEd started to administer the Grade 1 Readiness Test in school year 2005-06. The school readiness program is intended to determine the social, motor and readiness skills among the Grade 1 pupils that led to the development of self-confidence, good interpersonal relations and active participation in class activities. It also determines the level of progress of Grade 1 entrants across different

developmental domains that are critical in the tracking Grade 1 learning competencies. The test follows a similar developmental assessment of children in their early childhood years, using the Early Childhood Care and Development Checklist. Administered twice, the assessment is first administered two weeks before the opening of the school year while second is given after children have undergone the 8-week Early Childhood Development curriculum, focusing on the competencies not manifested by the child during the first assessment. Test results administered in 2006 revealed that only 36 percent of the Grade 1 entrants were ready for school (*Figure 8*).

Figure 8. Grade 1 Readiness Test, School Year 2006-2007
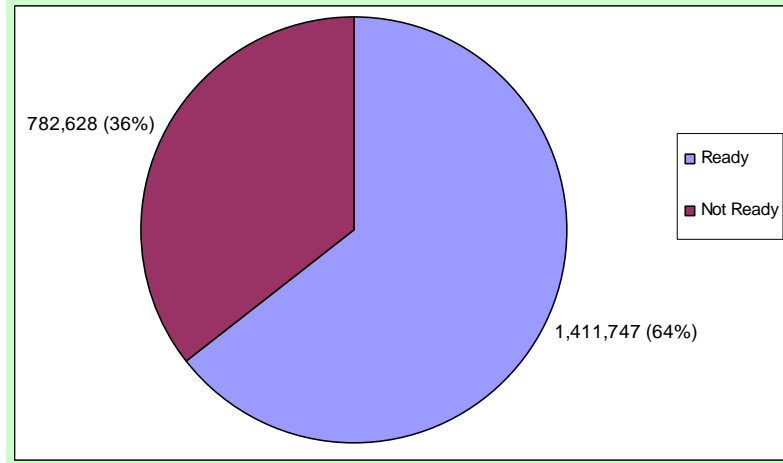
Universal Participation and Completion in Primary Education (Grades 1 to 3)

95. The low level of educational attainment of many Filipinos is contributing to the high number of basically and functionally illiterate Filipinos. Only 67.99 percent of the population age 6 years and older were able to finish grade school. This figure dropped to 61.66 percent for those completing up to the high school level (BEIS 2005). Worse, not all of those who finished high school have the desired level of competency that will enable them to stand the rigors of tertiary education or to qualify for work.

96. The problem of poor quality of high school graduates is a result of compounded deficiencies, which began in the foundation years of basic education (pre-school and the first three grade levels of elementary) and which was not fully addressed as the learners went up the higher grade levels. Also, the increasing number of non-completers and repeaters is mostly attributed to non-readiness of Grade 1 entrants due to lack of or no early childhood education. Non-readiness causes non-receptiveness of students to learning especially when the medium of instruction being used in the classroom is English. This reinforces the need to implement the use of the mother tongue as medium of instruction in the earlier grades to improve retention and learning. Other causes of dropping out, as cited in the initial result of the Study on the Causative Factors of Dropping Out (Abuso 2007), are family-related such as parent's lack of interest and support of children's schooling for the reason that they themselves are drop-outs; and poverty forcing children to drop from formal schooling to earn and augment the family's income.

Apparent and Net Intake Rates in Grade 1

97. To attain the EFA objective of having universal school participation and elimination of drop-out and repetition in primary education (Grades 1 to 3), the country has to ensure that all 6-year olds, entering Grade 1 have early childhood education experience prior to enrollment and are at the right age at the right time. *Table 8* shows the country's 2005 targets for primary education:

Table 8. Primary Education 2005 EFA Targets (in percent)

Indicators	Target	Actual
1. Net Intake Rate in Grade 1	77.7	36.81
2. Drop-Out Rate		
Grade 1	10.96	
Grade 2	4.35	
Grade 3	3.68	
3.Repetition Rate		
Grade 1	3.91	
Grade 2	2.15	
Grade 3	1.56	

98. The 2005 target of Net Intake Rate in Grade 1 (percent of 6 year olds enrolled in Grade 1) is 77.7 percent. However, only 36.81 percent of 6-year olds entered Grade 1 at the right age in that year. One reason is the earlier statement that parents tend to send their older children to school.

99. From 2005 to 2007, the number of pupils entering Grade 1 at the prescribed age of six increased by almost 10 points from 36.63 percent in 2005 to 45.62% in 2007. Most of these pupils were from Luzon than at the other regions in Visayas and Mindanao.

100. Of the estimated 2.26 million 6 years old in 2007, only 47 percent are enrolled in Grade 1 (*Table 9*). This means that the intake rate of 6 years old in Grade 1 remains low. Considering that they represent 9.17 percent of the total 6-11 year old population in the country, programs must be geared to encourage these children to enroll so as to improve overall participation rate.

Table 9. Children Aged 6-11 years, 2007

Age	Not in school	In school	Total
6	1,207	1,055	2,262
7	398	1,845	2,243
8	162	2,055	2,217
9	139	2,047	2,186
10	151	1,997	2,148
11	151	1,955	2,106
Total of 6-11	2,209	10,954	13,163

101. It was identified that a possible factor contributing to the low intake of 6 year olds as Grade 1 is the education package of private schools, especially in highly urbanized areas in the National Capital Region, Cebu and Davao. The general practice is to start nursery at age 4, kindergarten at age 5 and preparatory at age 6.

Hence, these children in private schools start Grade 1 at age 7, when in the public schools the policy is to start at age 6. Thus, there exist a disconnection in policy implementation between public and private schools.

Drop-Out and Repetition Rates in Grades 1 to 3

102.   The 2005 targets in drop-out and repetition rates were likewise not achieved (*Figure 9*). Highest rates for both indicators were in Grade 1. Actual 2005 performance was short of 3.57 percent and 1.71 percentage points, respectively from the set targets for that year. Although dropout and repetition rates decrease in percentage as grade level increases, this is a significant wastage in the system when translated into absolute values. In fact, there was hardly any improvement in the rates in the last five years. Undoubtedly, different drop-out prevention programs should be intensified and strengthened.

Figure 9. Drop-out Rates in Grade 1 to 3 (SY 2000-2001 to 2005-2006)
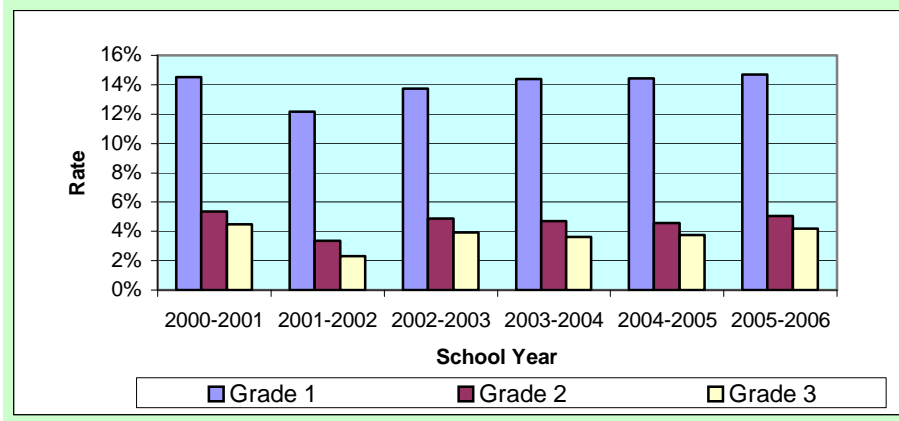
Objective 3:
Universal Completion of the Full Cycle of Basic Education Schooling with Satisfactory Achievement Levels

103. The Philippine 2015 Plan hopes that all children aged 6 to 11 shall be on track for completing elementary schooling with satisfactory achievement levels at every grade, and all children aged 12 to 15 are on track for completing secondary schooling with similarly satisfactory achievement levels every year.
Elementary Net Enrolment, Completion, and Transition to Secondary Level

104.   During the EFA 2000 Assessment, the Philippines posted a high 96.77 percent Net Enrolment Rate for both public and private primary school-age population. Since then the figures have declined to just 84.44 percent for the school year 2005-06 (*Figure 10*) which is way off the 2005 target of 92.19 percent. Two years later, net enrollment rate remained almost the same at 84.84 percent which is still far away from the 2010 target of 90 percent. This is, however, still low and not enough to position the country in achieving its target of universal access to elementary education by 2015

105.   Among those who were not in elementary schools include: a) children in remote areas without elementary schools (1 percent of the barangays nationwide did not

have elementary schools in 2005); b) children with special needs but without access to special education classes/schools; c) street children; and d) children in areas where schools ceased to operate due to armed-conflict.

Figure 10. Actual Net Enrolment Rate for Elementary Level
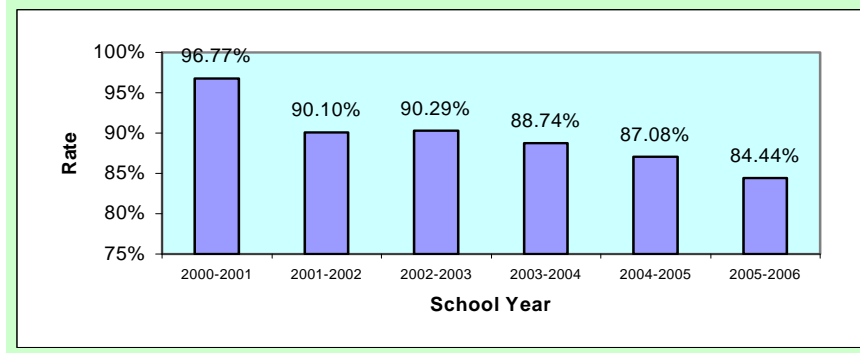
106.   Aside from the problem of getting all elementary school-age children to attend school, the system has been inefficient in ensuring that those who enter Grade 1 will complete elementary education within six years. There was an increase in completion rate from 1999 until it topped at 74.94 percent in school year 2001-2002 which even exceeded the 2005 target of 70.12 percent. From then on it started to fall until it recorded the lowest completion rate for the last 7 years in school year 2005-2006 (*Figure 11*). In 2007, completion rate improved to 73.06 percent or just less than two points away from the 2010 target of 75 percent.

Figure 11. Elementary Completion Rates, 2000-2005 Actual vs. 2005 Target
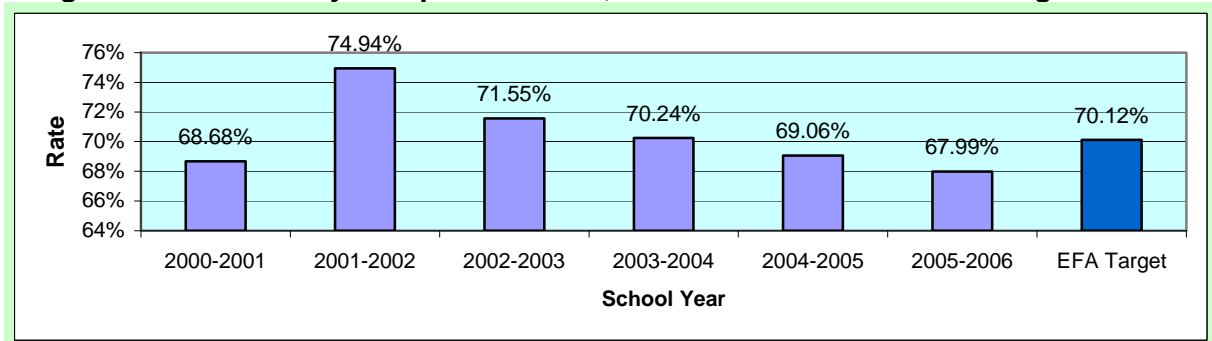
107.   Part of the reason for the low completion rate in the elementary level is the large number of barangays that have incomplete grade-level offerings. Of the 37,496 elementary schools in 2005, some 21 percent or 7,766 had incomplete grade-level offerings. Other major reasons include high incidence of child labor especially in rural areas and malnutrition.

108.   On a positive note, Transition Rate[9] is not a major concern. This means that the education system had been efficient in getting elementary graduates to enter the secondary school system. Since 1999, it never went down below 90 percent and even greatly improved in 2005 with a rate of 102.55 percent (*Figure 12*). The more

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[9] Transition Rate is an indicator that assesses the extent by which pupils are able to move to the next higher level of education (i.e. primary to intermediate and elementary to secondary).

than 100 percent transition rate was made possible by a number of Year 1 entrants who came back to formal schooling after being out of school for a year or more (these Year 1 entrants are older than the regular first year students). Out of the 17 regions, 14 regions had surpassed the 100 percent mark. In 2007, transition rate was recorded to be 96.97 percent, with ARMM leading the regions with 116.84 percent.

Figure 12. Transition Rate from Grade 6 to Year 1 High School Entrants
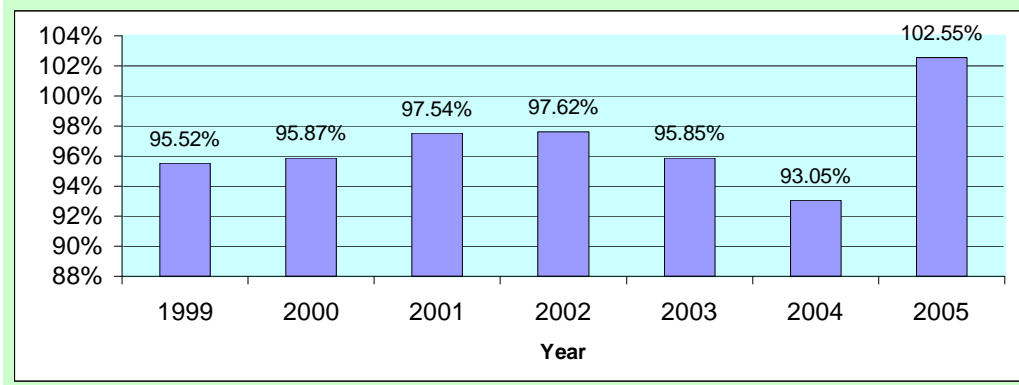
Secondary Enrolment and Completion Rates

109.   High school education has distinctive characteristics compared with elementary. While the factors might be the same, the extent of effects is more intense among high school students. Socio-economic factors like poverty, peer influence and family problems have greater impact on high school students making it difficult to keep them in school.

110.   As children went up to a higher level of education, the pressure not to continue was relatively high. In particular, boys are forced to stop schooling to do some economic activity to augment family income. *Figure 13* shows that in both enrolment and completion rates, the secondary education sub-sector had much lower performance than the elementary sub-sector and was not able to achieve the 2005 targets for said indicators. Even in Gross Enrolment Rate, it posted less than 100 percent which means that there was a big number of secondary school-age children and youth who were not enrolled in secondary schools.

Figure 13. Actual Performance of Secondary Level vs. 2005 Targets
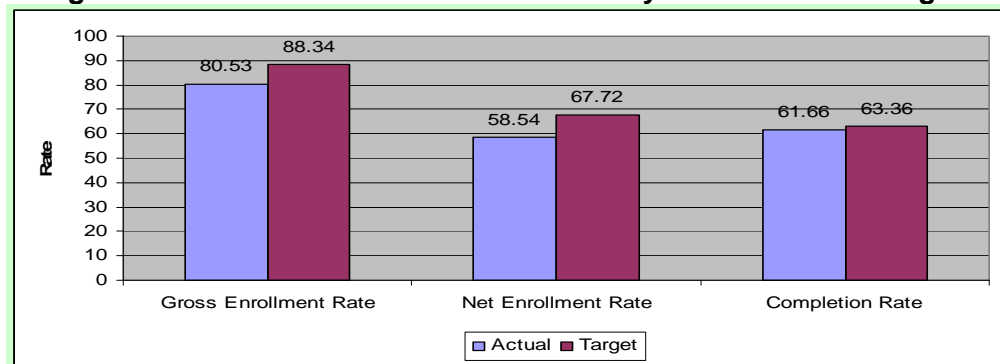
111.　In 2007, net enrollment rate improved from 58.54 percent in 2005 to 61.91 percent.　Dropout rates likewise showed progress when it dropped from 12.5 percent in 2005 to just 7.5 percent in 2007.

Table 10. Key Performance Indicators, 2005-08, in percent

Indicator	Level	Actual			Targets	
		SY 05-06	SY 06-07	SY 07-08	SY 08-09	SY 09-10
Participation Rate	Elem	84.4	83.2	84.8	85.2	90.0
	HS	58.5	58.6	61.9	63.6	70.0
Cohort Survival Rate	Elem	70.0	73.4	75.3	77.0	79.0
	HS	67.3	77.3	79.9	80.5	81.0
Completion Rate	Elem	68.1	71.7	73.1	75.0	77.0
	HS	61.7	72.1	75.4	76.0	76.3
Dropout Rate	Elem	7.3	6.4	6.0	5.0	4.0
	HS	12.5	8.6	7.5	6.0	5.0

112.　The high drop-out rates in the secondary level, particularly in Year 1 contributed to the low Completion Rate for the sub-sector. Aside from economic reasons, family problems, which include the lack of interest of parents to sustain the study of their children, broken family, and early marriage of high school students are prominent factors that contributed to the drop-out rates. Teacher incompetence both in subject matter content and motivational skills, teacher attitudes and personality were also identified but as less common reasons.

Objective 4:
Total Community Commitment to Attainment of Basic Education Competencies for All (Education for All by All) or the Grand Alliance.

113.　Education is a fundamental right, without which, all other rights are vulnerable. It is too complicated to be handled alone by the education department and by educators, hence, what is needed is a "Grand Alliance" of all sectors to support the universal attainment of basic education.

114.　The Education for All global movement recommends a grand alliance among government organizations, families and individuals in meeting the basic learning needs of all children, adults and out-of-school youth. Critical Task No. 8 of the EFA 2015 Plan is the creation of groups of advocates, champions and implementers. This involves organizing a national and community-level effort at each of the 79 provinces, 117 cities, 1,493 municipalities and possibly 41,945 barangays to broaden the use of basic educational resources, strengthen and formalize *societal responsibility* for education and provide the DepEd with strategic allies and stakeholder support for major policy decisions and programs in basic education.

115.　The grand alliance coordinates and integrates all efforts, both public and private, for the massive task required for Basic Learning Needs under one coherent framework and course of action. The provision of Basic Learning Needs as a societal responsibility calls for new and revitalized partnerships at all levels: (i) among all sub-sectors and forms of education; (ii) between education and other government departments (including planning, finance, labor, communication and other social

sectors); and (iii) between government and NGOs, private sector, local communities, religious groups and families in the sub-national level. National, regional and local educational authorities have unique obligations to provide assistance in education. To this effect, the EFA Implementation and Coordination Machinery was organized consisting of National, Regional and Provincial/Municipal level committees.

Resource Mobilization for Grand Alliance

116.   Pursuant to Critical Task No. 7 of the EFA 2015 Plan, the government is monitoring the allocation of actual resources of all agencies for activities perceived as related to meeting Basic Learning Needs. The primary reason for this is to account for all the monetary and non-monetary resources (financial, human, logistical and information, systems and networks) for EFA that should be mobilized, monitored and protected in all government agencies that serve to meet Basic Learning Needs. Another purpose is to systematize collective social marketing and thereby educate the public on the real amount budgeted by the government for basic education within the context of the expanded vision of education.

117.   Along with the deliberate mobilization of the non-monetary resources, the principal responsibility of the National EFA Committee is to periodically take stock of existing, programmed and potentially available financial resources as composite EFA funding. All partner agencies provide access to their systems and networks to facilitate information sharing, broaden the channels of basic learning and promote effective social advocacy.

Gaps and Disparities

a) *Urban-Rural Parity*

118.   In terms of access and completion of Early Childhood Education and Formal Basic Education, children in urban schools traditionally have the advantage over those who reside in rural areas. Poor students in the rural areas are more likely to drop out in Grade 6. Incidentally, poverty is highest in rural areas where majority of the population is still dependent on natural resource-based livelihood. This means that availability of financial resources (urban areas having more resources than rural areas) is a predictor of increased access and completion of basic education. Rural areas continue to record greater repetition rates particularly in regions in Mindanao with poor socio-economic indicators and those heavily affected by serious peace and order problems such that parents opt to keep their children within their sight rather than send them to schools where uncertainty lingers.

119.   In 2005, however, net enrolment registered a higher rate in rural areas than urban and partly urban areas due to the decrease in net enrolment for the latter and the establishment of additional elementary schools in barangays previously without one. The Net Enrolment Rate in rural schools increased by almost 10 percent from 2002 to 2005 (*Figure 14*).

Figure 14. Net Enrolment Ratio by Urban-Rural Classification in Elementary Schools (SY 2002-2003 to SY 2005-2006)
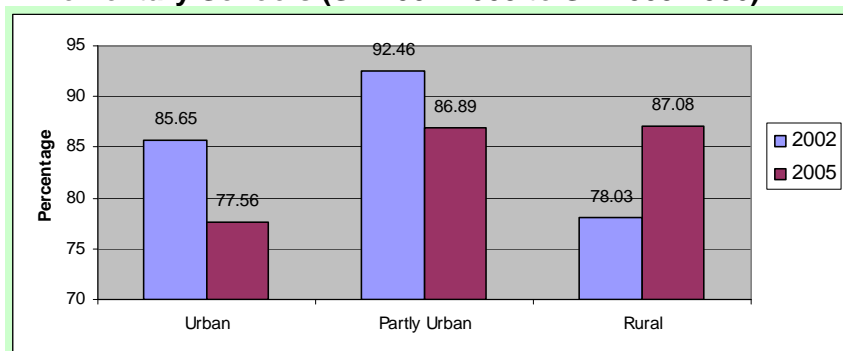
120.   The Elementary Completion Rates in both urban and rural areas declined from 2002 to 2005 (*Figure 15*). This is a worrisome trend since valuable resources are wasted especially in rural areas where the completion rate is now nearly just half. Likewise, completion rate in the secondary level is urban-biased. As mentioned earlier, the very poor performance completion rate in rural areas is partly due to the big number of incomplete schools in rural areas (more than 7,000 schools).

Figure 15. Completion Rate by Urban-Rural Classification in Elementary School
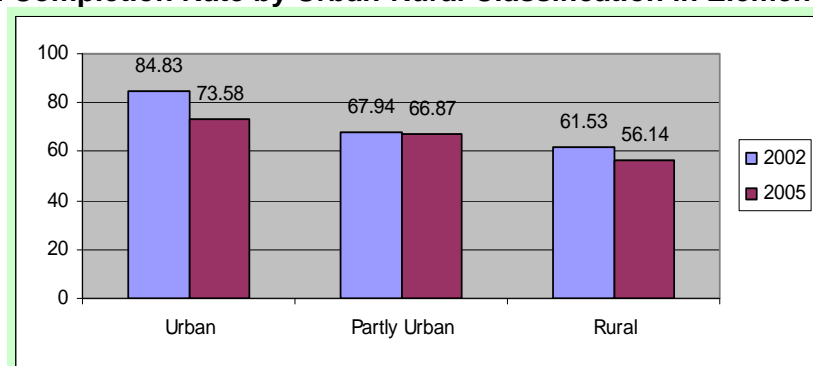
121.   In view of the above, the deployment of more government resources to rural schools is indeed very critical to achieve the country's targets of universal access and completion of basic education, and one that will require the amendment of Republic Act 7880[10].

b) Public-Private Disparity

122.   In terms of disparity between public and private schools, private schools performed better than the public schools in terms of keeping the students in school and in completing elementary (*Figure 21*) and secondary education (*Figure 22*). Specifically, the completion rates for secondary level have dropped to an alarming 57.7 percent in 2005 from 73.6 percent in 2002. Repetition rate in public elementary

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[10] Republic Act 7880, also known as the Roxas Law after its principal author then Congressman Mar Roxas, ensures fair distribution of the education capital budget among all the provinces. The law started Mar Roxas' advocacy for fair and equitable access to education, free from regional bias and political patronage considerations.

schools was nearly 10 times higher than private ones (*Figure 23*), while it was almost 5 times greater in public high schools (*Figure 24*).

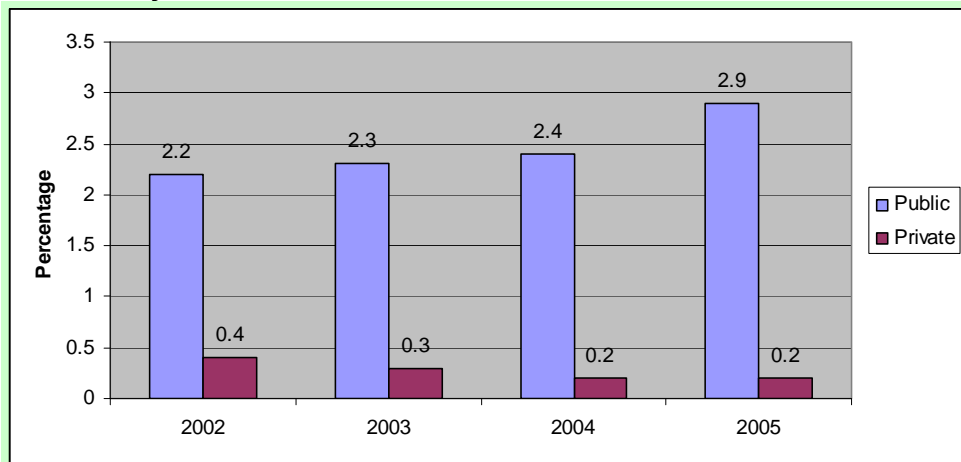**FIGURE 16. Completion Rate by Public-Private Classification in Elementary Schools**
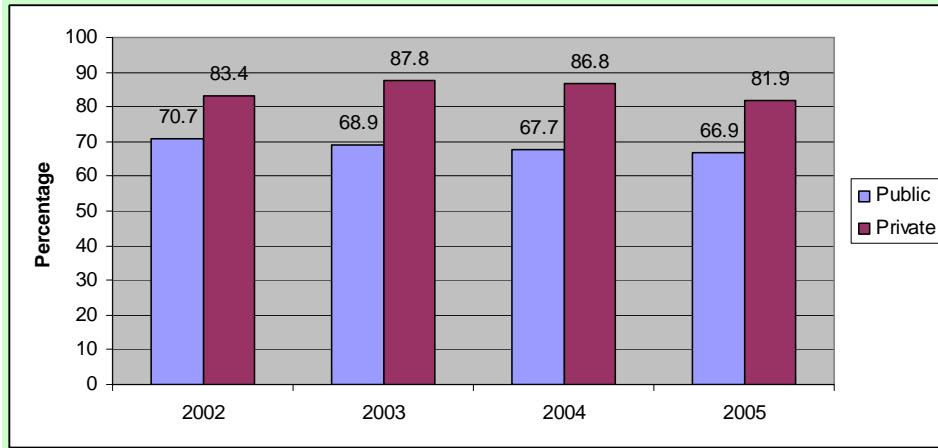
**FIGURE 17. Completion Rate by Public-Private Classification in Secondary Schools**
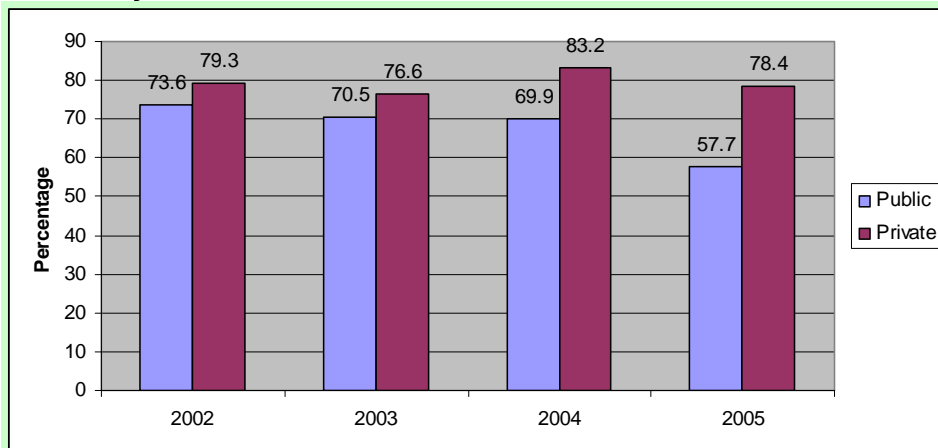
123. The better performance of private schools' is attributed to its enriched learning environments like small class sizes, low student to teacher ratio and availability of better quality physical infrastructure and school facilities such as computers, science laboratories, updated libraries, sports facilities and others. Inadequate financial resources limit the capacity of public schools to offer such services and facilities. Only 5 percent of the country's total number of students are enrolled and able to afford the high cost of private school education. The high cost of private schooling actually serve as an incentive to finish schooling and to finish it in the shortest time possible since education becomes an investment that must be recovered, and which is possible only if completed while public school education is practically free.

124. Still, completion rates in both public and private elementary schools, and public high schools fell to their lowest level in four years in 2005. The repetition rates in public elementary and secondary schools also deteriorated in 2005 while repetition rate in private schools slightly improved (*Figures 18* and 19).

FIGURE 18. Repetition Rate by Public-Private Classification in Elementary Schools

FIGURE 19. Repetition Rate by Public-Private Classification in Secondary Schools
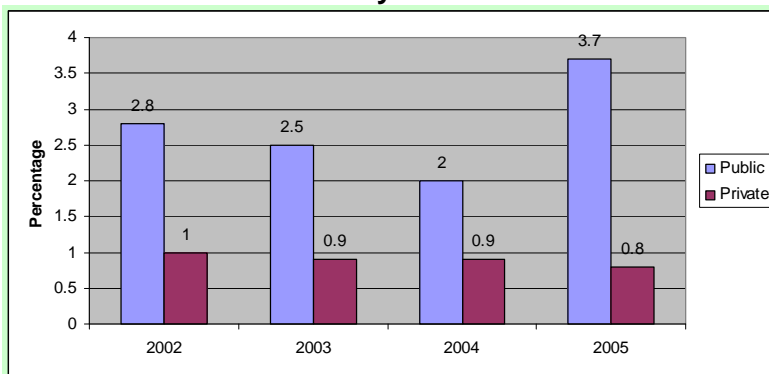
125.   It is worth noting that in both public and private schools, educational outcomes are on a decreasing trend especially student performance in mathematics and science. This means that while the provision of school infrastructure is important, educational efforts must also be focused on developing specialized programs in the areas of curriculum enhancement and teachers development.

c) Regional disparity

126.   Over the years, the disparity among regions in almost all key indicators significantly widened. While the functional literacy of the NCR remained high at 94.6 percent, at the end of the spectrum is ARMM with only 62.9 percent. All regions in the Visayas and Mindanao have a functional literacy below the national rate of 84.1 percent.

127.   Very few regions are doing well in increasing enrolment in early childhood education. Region VI with 87.41 had the highest percentage of Grade 1 entrants with preschool experience. This is around 20 percent higher than the 2005 EFA target of 67 percent. Again ARMM fared poorly in early childhood education performance. Only 10.05 percent of Grade 1 entrants have early childhood education experience.

In fact, all six regions in Mindanao fared poorly and scored way below the national average of 60.68 percent. ARMM also scored the lowest in gross enrolment rate and has the highest school leaver rate. On Elementary Net Enrolment Rate, the disparity between the highest (Region 4-A with 92.87 percent) and the lowest (Caraga with 74.8 percent) regions widened *(Figure 20)*. It is interesting to note that the top performing regions in enrolment rates specifically Regions I, II and III, are among the regions with the lowest poverty incidence and those with the lowest enrolment rates like ARMM, Regions IX and XII are among the poorest in the country. The observed correlations among these variables suggest that investment in basic education is promising for poverty reduction.

Figure 20. Net Enrolment Rate in Elementary Schools, 2000-2005
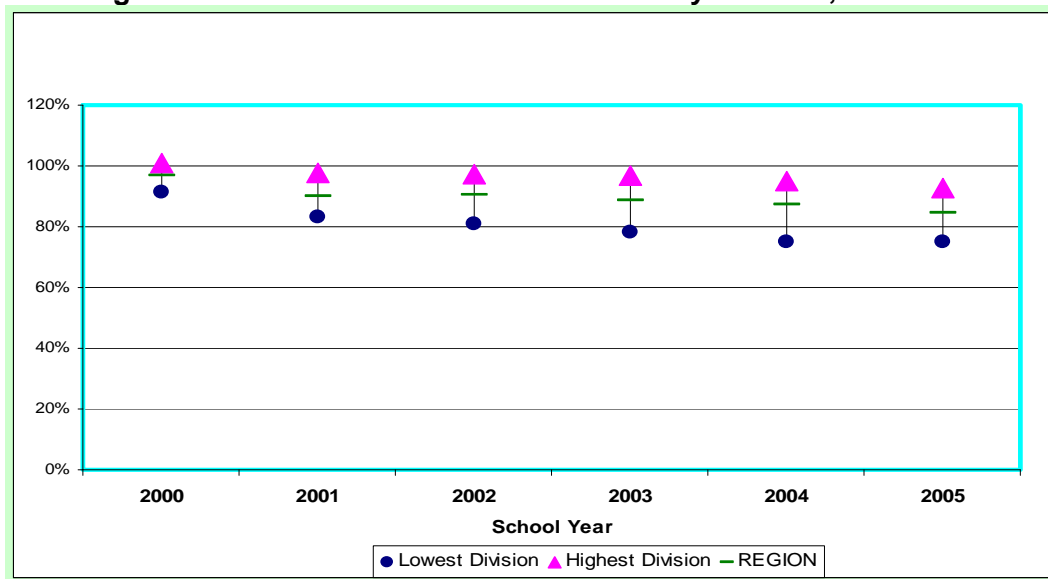
128.   While disparity between regions at the secondary level has been reduced over time, the disparity in 2005 was still significant with the NCR exhibiting a high of 74.9 percent, which is almost 40 percent higher than ARMM's 35.6 percent. Disparity was much worse in terms of completion rates in both elementary and secondary education ranging from a high of 85.48 percent (Region 1) to a low of 34.76 percent (ARMM).

129.   Considering the performance of 187 DepEd divisions' in all of the key EFA indicators, the top 20 performing divisions all came from regions in the Luzon island except for Tagbilaran in the Visayas which placed ninth (*Table 12*). Batanes, which is in the most northern part of the Philippines, topped all the divisions followed by Balanga City in Region III and Lipa City in Region IV-A. Six divisions in Region I (Candon, Laoag, Vigan, Ilocos Norte, San Fernando, Alaminos) occupied prominent places in the ranking. Metro Manila has 5 divisions in the top 20 although the highest places, Taguig and Pateros, are only tenth on the list.

Table 12. Top 20 Performing Divisions in Selected Key EFA Indicators (2005)

REGION	DIVISIONS	RANKING
2	Batanes	1
3	Balanga City	2
4A	Lipa City	3
1	Candon City	4
1	Laoag City	5
1	Vigan City	6
2	Tuguegarao City	7
3	Olongapo City	8
7	Tagbilaran City	9
NCR	Taguig and Pateros	10
NCR	Makati City	11
NCR	Pasig City and San Juan	12
4A	Calamba City	13
3	San Fernando City, Pampanga	14
1	Ilocos Norte	15-16
NCR	Mandaluyong City	15-16
1	San Fernando City, La Union	17
4A	Batangas City	18
1	Alaminos City	19
NCR	Quezon City	20

130.   At the opposite end, the bottom 20 divisions mostly came from Mindanao regions (*Table 13*). The worst division is Sulu, followed by Basilan then Maguindanao. All three divisions are from ARMM. The worst performing for the Visayas is Negros Oriental at fifth.

Table 13. Bottom 20 Performing Divisions in Selected Key EFA Indicators (2005)

REGION	DIVISIONS	RANKING
ARMM	Lanao del Sur 1	167-168
4B	Palawan	167-168
11	Davao del Norte	169
10	Bukidnon	170
12	North Cotabato	171
10	Valencia City	172
10	Lanao del Norte	173-174
9	Zamboanga del Norte	173-174
11	Davao Oriental	175
8	Calbayog City	176
6	San Carlos City	177
8	Samar (Western Samar)	178

9	Zamboanga del Sur	179
9	Zamboanga Sibugay	180
11	Davao del Sur	181
7	Negros Oriental	182
12	Sarangani	183
ARMM	Maguindanao	184
ARMM	Basilan	185
ARMM	Sulu	186

131. Poverty is still a consistent determinant of educational performance. Almost all the top performing divisions are in regions which have low poverty incidence and low unemployment rate while the poor performers are from regions with high poverty rates. Sulu particularly, has poverty incidence of 92 percent (2002), which only decreased to 88 percent in 2003, while Basilan's poverty incidence of 63 percent in 2002 even increased to 65.6 percent the following year.

132. The Philippine Mid-Term Progress Report on the Millennium Development Goals, highlighted that in all of the goals and targets, existing indicators exhibit significant disparity by region. Only four regions, namely Ilocos, Central Luzon, CALABARZON (4-A) and the NCR, all in Luzon, consistently lead the regions in pulling up national averages for many of the indicators. The rest of the country's regions particularly in Mindanao are lagging behind in most of the targets. Universalizing access and completion in regions like Caraga and the ARMM with high poverty incidence will require convergence of efforts of various stakeholders to implement a comprehensive program which will not only address the needs of the schoolchildren but also their respective families.

133. In summary, the regional performance in key outcome indicators can be classified, as follows: a) Moving Ahead - Regions with performance above the national average and have attained the 2005 or 2010 targets; b) Catching-Up – Regions with improving performance but lower than the national average and short-of the 2005 or 2010 targets; c) Losing Momentum – Regions with performance above the national average in earlier years but declined in later years; and d) Falling Farther Behind – Regions with performance below the national average in earlier years and continue to decline up to 2005 or 2010. In almost all indicators, majority of the regions are considered as "falling further behind" (*Tables 14-15*).

Table 14. Classification of Regional Performance, Per Key Indicator, 2005

	Moving Ahead	Catching Up	Losing Momentum	Falling Further Behind
ELEMENTARY				
Completion	I, II, III, IV-A, V, NCR	CARAGA	CAR, VII, IV-B	VI, VII, IX, X, XII, ARMM
Net Enrolment Rate	IV-A, NCR		III, IV-B, CAR	I, II, IV-B, V, VI, VII, IX, X, XI, XII, CARAGA
School Leaver Rate	I, III, NCR	II, CARAGA	IV-A, IV-B, V, VI, VII, CAR	VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, ARMM
National Achievement		IV-B, CAR, CARAGA	I, III, IV-A, VII, VIII, IX	II, V, VI, X, XI, XII, NCR,

				ARMM
Test				ARMM

SECONDARY				
Completion	I, II, III, IV-A, NCR	ARMM	IV-B, V, VI, VII, XII, CARAGA, CAR	VIII, IX, X, XI
Net Enrolment Rate	III, IV-A, NCR	ARMM	I, CAR	II, IV-B, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, CARAGA
School Leaver Rate		ARMM	I, II, III, IV-A, IV-B, VI, CAR, NCR	V, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, CARAGA
National Achievement Test		VII, VIII, CARAGA	I, II, IV-B, IX	III, IV-A, V, VI, X, XI, XII, CAR, ARMM, NCR

Table 14. Classification of Regional Performance, Per Key Indicator, 2008

|	Moving Ahead	Catching Up	Losing Momentum	Falling Further Behind
ELEMENTARY				
Completion	I, II, III, IV-A, VII, NCR	IV-B, V, VI, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, CARAGA, ARMM, CAR		
Net Enrolment Rate	III, IV-A, ARMM, NCR	V, VII, IX, X, XII, CARAGA	I	II, IV-B, VI, VII, XI, CAR
Dropout Rate	I, III, NCR	II, IV-A, IV-B, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, CARAGA, ARM, CAR		
National Achievement Test	CARAGA	I, II, III, IV-A, IV-B, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, ARMM, CAR, NCR		
SECONDARY				
Completion	I, II, III, IV-A, NCR	IV-B, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, CARAGA, ARMM, CAR		
Net Enrolment Rate	I, III, IV-A, NCR	II, IV-B, V, VIII, IX, X, XI, CARAGA,		VI, VII, XII, ARMM, CAR
Dropout Rate	I, IV-A	II, III, IV-B, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, CARAGA, ARMM, CAR, NCR		

National Achievement Test	VIII, CARAGA	I, II, III, IV-A, IV-B, V, VI, VII, IX, X, XI, XII, ARMM, CAR, NCR		

d) Gender Parity

134.   In regard to gender parity, the situation in the Philippines is quite different as the boys are the disadvantaged group when it comes to education while the World EFA Goals specifically recognize the inequality suffered by female children and thus aims to ensure that girls will have full and equal access to basic education.

135.   During the review, gender disparity against boys in all key outcome indicators (Gross Enrolment Rate, Net Enrolment Rate, Completion Rate and Repetition Rate) in formal basic education was not addressed, in fact, it worsened over time. Gender parity was only attained in early childhood education. As the learners moved to higher grades and year levels, the system was losing more boys (*Figure 21).* For every female dropout, there were two male dropouts. In all 17 regions, there were more male leavers compared to females.

Figure 21. Elementary and Secondary Participation Rates by Sex
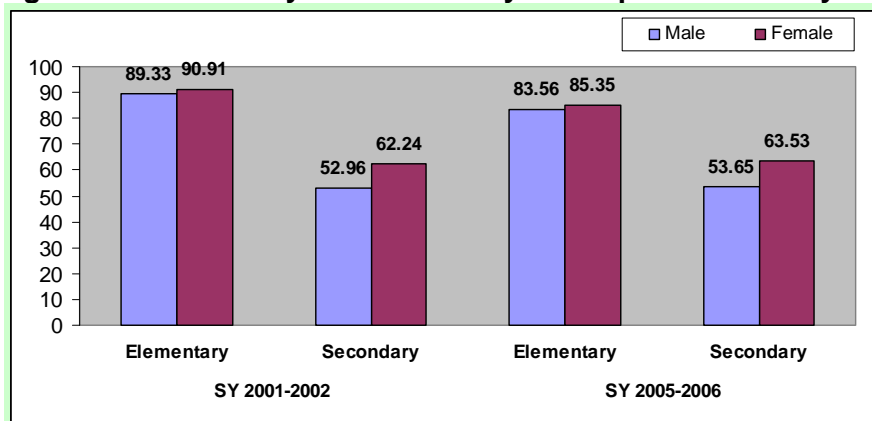
136.   In terms of basic literacy rates, females (94.3 percent) ranked higher than males (92.6 percent). Likewise, more boys did not perform well in national standardized tests. The boys' scores are 5 to 6 percentage points lower than those of girls'.

137.   Poverty is often cited as the main reason behind the high drop-out rates as male children are forced to help augment the family's income. Another key factor affecting poor performance of male children is the inability of the teachers and schools to make the learning environment interesting and relevant to their specific needs, especially the adolescents. The school system which is dominated by female teaching and non-teaching personnel should seriously revisit its schools and classroom practices which might have made teaching-learning irrelevant and uninteresting, particularly to boys.

138.   If the trend of widening disparity against boys continues, Philippine society in the future will have male citizens who may liabilities. World EFA Goal No.5 which hopes

to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015 is far from realization, unless the DepEd implements most effective approaches to address the specific needs of male children.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

139.   To attain the 2015 goal and targets of Education For All, the country needs to implement policies, programs and projects that will address the needs of specific learners, particularly those belonging to the un-reached and under-served groups.

A. Explicit Articulation of Inclusive Education Policy and Substantial Increase in Budget Provision

140.   First, DepEd needs to explicitly articulate *"Inclusive Education"* as the overall policy and planning framework of EFA. This policy will dictate how the curriculum will be delivered including the programs, projects, and resource requirements that will support the specific needs of particular groups of learners. One of the policies that DepEd will be issuing soon is the institutionalization of Alternative Delivery Mode Programs that will cater to learners in difficult and different circumstances and which will use self-learning modules.

141.   Second, the government should take comprehensive but concrete actions to address the inadequate use of the budget for basic education. Specifically, the government should consider the following in coming-up with a financing strategy for EFA:
   - underinvestment in basic education (only 2.4 percent of the GDP); about 85 percent of DepEd's budget goes to salaries of personnel; and
   - inequitable distribution of limited national and local government resources, especially for capital outlay and operating costs due to some "loopholes" in existing policies.

142.   The current inequitable distribution of resources will require the government to review existing legislations and policies in allocating resources for schools in rural areas to address the existing bias against rural schools. Moreover, there is a need to revisit the implementation of the law on "Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education" to find out if the national government subsidy to private schools benefits the poor students and if the private schools produce better quality outputs than the public schools.

B. Addressing the Socio-Economic and Geographical/Geophysical Factors that Affect the attainment of Education For All

143.   The Philippine basic education system should be flexible and responsive to the needs of learners as affected by non-school factors, such as:

   a.   *Economic Factors*

   - The country is still dependent on agriculture, fishing and forestry but at the same time an emerging global market for business process, ICT spare parts, medical services, to name a few, and this will require

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DepEd's *implementation of a more relevant basic education curriculum in relation to local and global needs.*

- The country is a significant source of migrant workers – *schools need to be responsive to the needs of schoolchildren of migrant workers (especially those with deviant/risk behavior, falterers, etc.).*

- High poverty incidence has resulted in non-affordability of the private cost of basic education to very poor households; there is a need to explore *possible inclusion in the DepEd and/or LGU budget grants for pupils/ students of very poor families to cover other schooling-related expenses.*

b.   *Social Factors*

- The increasing percentage of school-age population requires the government to effectively and efficiently implement fiscal reforms as this will have major implications in attaining the goal of education for all. In this regard, DepEd should actively participate in advocating for efficient tax revenue collection. Moreover, mobilization of resources from local governments, private sector and other partners will also help the country finance the increasing budgetary requirements of EFA.

c.   *Language and Cultural Factors*

- With different ethnic and Muslim groups spread across country – effective implementation of the curriculum indigenization policy and national curriculum for Muslim education is imperative.

- With more than 111 dialects spoken there is a need to revisit the current policy on medium of instruction: effective nationwide implementation of the use of the mother tongue or the child's language as medium for instruction in pre-school and the first two grades in the elementary level.

d.   *Geographical and geophysical factors*

- Considering the huge size of the basic education system, (over 40,000 public schools in 7,107 islands) the <u>applications of modern information and communication technology</u>   may offer the only feasible medium for delivering   high-quality instruction to millions of learners in a large, diverse and geographically dispersed population.

- DepEd must seriously consider adopting a flexible school calendar – e.g., first three months of the school calendar (June to August) are the rainy months with frequent flooding in Metro Manila; supervision of schools is very difficult and dangerous during the rainy and typhoon season.

- There is need to adopt differentiated designs for school facilities to withstand natural calamities such as typhoons and earthquakes

C. Reaching the Un-reached and Underserved Groups of Learners

Providing children in difficult/different circumstances access to quality and relevant basic education is still a big challenge that the country should immediately address. To wit:

- Children Engaged in Labor. DepEd needs to intensify the implementation of its distance learning program both for elementary and secondary levels so that schoolchildren who really need to work to earn a living could still continue schooling even without regularly attending classes.

- Street Children. DepEd needs to establish a strong partnership with other government agencies and other partners (NGOs, private/business sector/LGUs) in providing basic education and other social and livelihood services to street children and their families (the main objective of the latter services is to sustain children's schooling).

- Children with Special Needs (Gifted and Differently-abled). With the limited coverage of existing government educational facilities, DepEd together with other agencies and partners need to work on the expansion of basic education services to reach more persons with disability. DepEd should specifically work on the strengthening and expansion of its SPED classes in the existing public elementary and secondary schools and the strengthening and enrichment of its regular classes to mainstream the people with disabilities.

- Muslim Children. With the big percentage (93%) of Muslim school-age population in the public school system, the effective implementation of the national curriculum for Muslim education in the public school system is very critical. The overall goal of the curriculum is to develop the core competencies of Muslim children in order for them to function effectively in society within the context of their environment and culture and that of the wider community. In the long run, it will hopefully effectively address the economic, social, political problems in Muslim-dominated areas and the entire country in general.

- Children in Conflict-Affected Areas. Convergence of support for the protection of children, especially those who are not educated from being vulnerable targets for training and indoctrination as fighters. There is also a need to execute a covenant among and between concerned parties to protect schools as "peace zones".

145. In summary, the country was not able to attain its 2005 targets in almost all key outcome indicators in Early Childhood Education, Formal Basic Education and Alternative Learning System. Most of the regions have performance classified as "falling further behind" or with performance lower than the national level in 2002 and continued to decline in 2005. While substantial investments were poured into the establishment of basic education facilities, these were not enough to ensure that all 3-5 year olds are in Early Childhood Education learning centers, and all school-aged children were in school and able to continue and eventually complete basic education with satisfactory achievement level. The basic education system should

be responsive to the differentiated needs of learners where a "one-size fit all" or conventional interventions (such as construction of classrooms, provision of textbooks, etc) are not enough or will no longer work.

146.   While there are pockets of excellence in some areas, the overall performance of the country is declining and disparity among regions, against learners in rural schools (especially in terms of access and completion) and against male children is widening. For the country to achieve its targets in 2010 and move ahead towards attaining its 2015 targets, the various basic education stakeholders should focus their efforts and resources in assisting the regions, divisions, schools or groups of learners who are lagging behind in key outcome indicators.

147.   In addition to the recommendations put forward vis-à-vis the thematic challenges discussed, the Country EFA Mid-Decade Assessment highly recommends the following policy actions and programs:

Early Childhood Education.
1. Increase public and private investment in Early Childhood Education to build more facilities for increasing 3-5 year old enrollees
2. Support alternative modes of delivering Early Childhood Education (home or community-based)
3. Improve the quality of Early Childhood Education services by strengthening the registration/accreditation system
4. Intensify the health and nutrition component of Early Childhood Education

Formal Basic Education
a. Intensify efforts to reach the un-reached and underserved through the following:
- Establishment of elementary and secondary schools in un-/under-served areas
- Complete the over 7,000 incomplete elementary schools through the multigrade scheme; develop/procure multi-level instructional materials for pupils; establish a separate career path for multi-grade teachers; and provide training programs and monetary incentives for multi-grade teachers (while a separate career path has yet to be established)
- Provide direct support to learners of very poor families (e.g., conditional cash transfer)

b. Scale-up promising or proven effective innovations addressing needs of children in difficult or different circumstances (children engaged in labor; street children; children with special needs; Muslim and indigenous peoples' children; children in conflict-affected areas; and children with deviant/risk behavior)

c. Improve the quality of formal basic education services
- Further "decongest" the curriculum to focus on developing life skills coupled with an effective and efficient national testing and assessment system
- Implement the "Mother Tongue/Child's Language" as medium of instruction in Early Childhood Education and Grades 1 to 3 levels

- Strengthen and deepen the implementation of the Child-Friendly School System which promotes rights-based education (should not just be a program or a strategy but a culture that every school should nurture)
- Scale-up and strengthen the implementation of Every Child A Reader Program in all public elementary schools nationwide
- Expand and/or deepen High School Bridge/Remediation Program for Year 1 entrants
- Implement a comprehensive ICT program to deliver the same high quality of basic education services to all schoolchildren at the shortest possible time
- Rationalize the implementation of in-service training programs by different levels – should be competency-based and demand-driven (start from school level)
- Institutionalize the Accreditation Programs of elementary and secondary education

Alternative Learning System
a. Operationalize the Joint Circular on establishing local literacy coordinating councils and literacy implementing units
b. Fast track the introduction of methodologies to incorporate basic and functional literacy skills development in existing community development programs of various partners
c. Increase DepEd's budget for the Bureau of Alternative Learning System to enable it to continuously undertake policy/standard setting, national coordination and quality assurance (providing technical support and monitoring and evaluation)
d. Redesign the Alternative Learning System program viz. Ladderized Technical and Vocational Skills Program of TESDA
e. Intensify the Parent Education Program to develop parents' functional literacy skills and to advocate the value of being "educated"

Governance, Management and Finance
a. Increase public and private investment in basic education and provide more resources for depressed, disadvantaged and underserved areas
b. Strengthen governance and management of the system

   Grand Alliance
   - Establish and operationalize the EFA Implementation Coordination Machinery by tapping existing EFA-related structures at different levels
   - Translate the National EFA Plan into Regional, Provincial, City and Municipal Levels
   - Expand/restructure the local school board to make it more responsive to EFA needs (including Early Childhood Education and Alternative Learning System)

   Within the Department of Education
   - Fully implement decentralization through school-based management (includes but not limited to restructuring of the organization and reforming the financial management system to fully support school-based management)
   - Enforce transparency and accountability at different levels