



Every year on September 8, International Literacy Day is observed to bring attention and recommendations concerning pressing literacy issues both locally and globally. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, or UNESCO, founded the International Literacy Day in 1966 "to remind the public of the importance of literacy as a matter of dignity and human rights." The theme year, "Transforming Literacy Learning Spaces," reflects on the basic significance of literacy learning spaces for fostering resilience and guaranteeing high-quality, equitable, and inclusive education for all.

There is a global challenge in the **persisting 771 million total illiterate people around the world, most of whom are women, who are more vulnerable since they still struggle with fundamental reading and writing skills.** The recent World Bank report on learning poverty revealed that **the pandemic has likely caused a sharp increase in global learning poverty, to an estimated 70 percent and exacerbated inequalities in education.** The simulation modeling for this report shows that **7 out of 10 children in low- and middle-income countries could now be suffering from learning poverty.**¹ Learning poverty measures the share of children who cannot read and understand short, age-appropriate texts with comprehension by age 10, or between Grade 4 and Grade 5 under the Philippines' K-12 system. The same report also showed that **9 out of 10 Filipino children can't read or as many as 91 percent of children late primary age "are not proficient in reading."** The large number of Out of School Youth exacerbates the issue as **5 percent of primary school-aged children are not enrolled making them excluded in learning in schools, according to the World Bank. In the 2019 FLEMMS Final Report, among the estimated 57.7 million Filipinos 3 to 30 years old, 43% or an estimated 24.8 million were not attending school in 2019.**

Rural children and youth, children and youth from low-income urban households, child workers, children and adolescents with disabilities, children and youth living in conflict situations and disaster-affected areas, Muslims, and Indigenous peoples tend to have the highest rates of not attending school. The country's increasing learning poverty rate corresponds with school closures in 2020 and 2021, forcing educational institutions to turn to online or module-based at-home classes. And to put things worst, the lack of internet access and flexible digital learning materials during the pandemic only served to widen the gap between rich and poor countries. The figures highlight the monumental work that governments and partners must undertake in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Target 4.6, which calls for ensuring that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men, and women, achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030. With a learner-centric approach that supports literacy learning from the perspective of lifelong learning, we must leverage, adapt, and transform actions and strategies to make sure that one is left behind. E-Net Philippines joins this international celebration of literacy day. We support the call of UNESCO to leverage the existing innovations among the countries, adapt to the ever-evolving learner needs of the youth and adults, and transform their literacy learning spaces.

¹The State of Global Learning Poverty 2022 Update

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/publication/state-of-global-learning-poverty>



We demand that the government uphold its commitment to provide inclusive, equitable, secure, and high-quality education, with literacy efforts wisely incorporated. Additionally, we appeal to all Filipinos to join us in promoting innovative, non-traditional approaches to education as well as reforms and advancements in the field.

E-Net Philippines further puts forward the following recommendations:

LEVERAGE

- Invest in a National Literacy Program for individuals across all ages (youth and adults), in all spheres of life (family, school, job, community, etc.), and using formal, non-formal, and informal modalities, with a focus on the marginalized, excluded, and vulnerable sectors. (MEVS).
- Continue to expand and promote the adoption of flexible learning strategies, such as those instituted during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Conduct thorough assessment of the Basic Education-Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) to provide lessons on how appropriate, relevant and effective are the programs implemented, especially the multi-modal learning approach.

ADAPT

- Proactively seek 1 million learners from the marginalized sectors – persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, Muslims, those affected by disasters and conflict situations including learners who dropped out because of COVID19 and provide budget for their education through the ALS program.
- Expand school feeding programs as an essential of emergency and pandemic response and as part of the overall strategy to address hunger.

Review the appropriate literacy teaching and learning pedagogies appropriate during and post-pandemic.

- Expand learning outcomes to include competencies and skills that go beyond basic reading and math, and reflect the local values, needs and expectations for education.
- Increasing the quantity of teachers must be addressed as well as improving the quality of teachers so that all are well trained and motivated.

TRANSFORM

- Establish community-based learning centers (CLCs) in identified IP communities without access to government schools and intensify the delivery of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) that is appropriate to age levels and responds to the different contexts of learners.
- Ensure a Safe Learning Environment where child/human rights and positive discipline are promoted and upheld, and both learners and education frontliners are safe from the effects of pandemics and calamities.
 - * Supports the passage of the SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression, and Sex Characteristics)-Equality Bill
 - *Provide of health services and hygiene kits for learners, teachers, and personnel
 - *Provide of feeding and immunization services to learners
 - *Provide of education infrastructures and services to the last mile schools
- Conduct a comprehensive and critical review of the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers? and identify the gaps, issues, and challenges in advancing the welfare and rights of teachers as professionals and improving the conditions for effective teaching and learning, for the purpose of crafting policy recommendations and initiate complementary and amendatory legislation to further strengthen the Law and fulfill the goals enshrined therein.
- Involve stakeholders - key sectors and CSOs, in crafting the IRR of newly-passed laws - Inclusive Education for Learners with Disabilities Law (RA 11650), Excellence in Teachers Education Act (RA 11713), ensuring it is consistent with the intention and provisions of the laws.
- Strengthen Adult Learning and Education (ALE), promote and strengthen lifelong learning development in the country. #####

*Envisioning a Philippine society where quality education is a basic human right;
where everyone has access to multi-cultural, gender-fair, liberating, lifelong education.*

REFERENCES:

- <https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/08/10/opinion/columns/why-9-out-of-10-filipino-children-cant-read/1854046>
- <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1519526/deped-on-wb-report-that-90-of-kids-suffer-from-learning-poverty-it-is-being-resolved>
- <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1632864/wb-ph-learning-poverty-among-highest-in-region>
- https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/years-of-remote-schooling-exacerbate-learning-poverty-among-filipino-children?fbclid=IwAR0MKOhIRHCWQaDbCSXQY_u8Lyz-24vflBxYSc03CV7OR4QcdBokcYVRwbU