

September 8, 2023 - INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY

Today, we celebrate Literacy Day with the theme, 'Promoting Literacy for a World in Transition: Building the Foundation for Sustainable and Peaceful Societies.' Literacy is a fundamental human right that lays the foundation for lifelong learning and personal development. In the Philippines, the rate of learning poverty is at 91%, this means that 9 out of 10 children aged 10 are unable to read and understand a short, age-appropriate text. This is the highest rate of learning poverty in Southeast Asia and one of the highest in the world. Learning Poverty in the Philippines is 56.4 percentage points higher than the average for the East Asia and Pacific region and 30.5 percentage points higher than the average for lower middle income countries.

Many factors contribute to learning poverty in the Philippines, including:

Poverty. Children from poor families are more likely to be malnourished, have health problems, and have less access to quality education.

Hunger. Hunger can lead to fatigue and difficulty concentrating, which can make it difficult for children to learn.

Child labor. Many children in the Philippines are forced to work to help support their families, which leaves them with little time for school.

Lack of access to quality education. Many schools in the Philippines are overcrowded, under-resourced, and have unqualified teachers.

COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problem of learning poverty in the Philippines. The closure of schools has left many children out of school and without access to education.

International Literacy Day is a chance to work together to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), which aims to combat learning poverty, promote education, and encourage lifelong learning. It's also an opportunity to recognize the importance of literacy in creating more inclusive, harmonious, and sustainable societies. E-Net Philippines acknowledges the connection between literacy and development and invites everyone to join us in advocating for safe, inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all by holding the government responsible and accountable.

E-Net Philippines puts forward the following recommendations:

1. Strengthen the education system aligned with quality education goals, sustainable development and lifelong learning that goes beyond basic literacy. By integrating sustainable development and lifelong learning into the curriculum and teaching practices, learners are encouraged to continue developing their literacy skills throughout their lives and foster a deeper understanding of the world and the importance of literacy in addressing societal challenges.

2. Build and upgrade schools, community learning centers (CLCs), inclusive learning resource centers (ILRCs) and other educational facilities in marginalized areas to ensure that more learners have access to quality education. This increased access is a fundamental step toward achieving literacy goals.

3. Make literacy programs accessible to all. Prioritizing marginalized areas ensures that resources are directed toward populations that may have historically faced barriers to literacy. This targeted approach helps bridge literacy gaps and promotes equity in educational opportunities. This also means that literacy instruction is tailored to the needs of all learners, including learners with disabilities, indigenous communities, adult learners and other vulnerable populations.

4. Allocate a substantial budget for teachers' training and learning material production. Support teachers' requirements for professional development focused on literacy instruction and equip teachers and educators with effective strategies for teaching literacy. Develop and provide inclusive and quality learning materials, including books, tools and digital learning resources that promote literacy.

5. Multilingualism is intricately linked to literacy and has far-reaching benefits for individuals, communities, and societies. Recognizing the importance of multilingualism in literacy and adult education is crucial for promoting educational equity, cultural diversity and preservation.

Literacy is not merely the ability to read and write; more importantly, literacy should enable individuals to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information, make reasoned judgments, and solve complex problems. On this International Literacy Day, let us take action, stand up and work together for literacy that serves as a foundational pillar for sustainable development and lifelong learning. #####