

A CRPD-Compliant Inclusive Education Policy Agenda for Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities

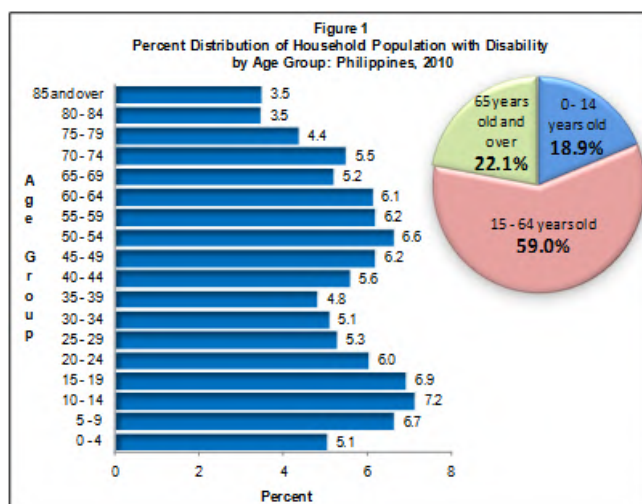
Background on Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (CYDs)

Disability prevalence is increasing globally, especially in low income countries. In 2017, there is an estimated 7.5 billion people with disabilities or 1 in every 7 people. According to the World Report on Disability, 1 in 10 persons with disabilities are children (0-14 years) and 80% are living in developing countries. Among marginalized groups, children with disabilities remain the most excluded and discriminated. They are less likely to attend school, access medical services, or have their voices heard in society. Their disabilities also place them at a higher risk of physical abuse, and often exclude them from receiving proper nutrition or humanitarian assistance in emergencies. Girls with disabilities face a double disadvantage because they are also constrained by traditional gender roles and cultural barriers.

In the Philippines, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority in 2010 indicate that of the household population of 92.1 million, 1.443 million Filipinos or 1.57%, have a disability. Disability was highest among persons aged 5 to 19 years (20.8%) or school-aged children and youth or roughly 300,000 in 2010.

According to the Philippine Association for Citizens with Developmental and Learning Disabilities, Inc. (PACDL) in 2011, there are about 4 million children and youth with disabilities, of whom only 2 percent go to school and 1 percent are properly diagnosed.

UNICEF in 2016 estimates there are about 3.3 million children with disabilities in the Philippines, or about 8 percent of the population between ages zero to 18.



***For children with disabilities,
schools are often physically inaccessible
or unable to cater to their needs.***

- ◆ Only less than 3% of Filipino children with disabilities have access to education (Save the Children);
- ◆ Limited and un-updated data from the Department of Education (DepEd) reported that 97% of children with disabilities aged 7-12 years old were not in school (2007-2008);
- ◆ For SY 2015-2016, only around 250,000 CYDs were enrolled in elementary and around 100,000 in high school, in only 648 SPED Centers and regular schools offering special education program for CYDs (DepEd);
- ◆ Enrollment in SPED are predominantly fast learners/gifted, and not children with disabilities.

Issues and Barriers to Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities

“Education is one of the most effective ways to break the cycle of discrimination that children and youth with disabilities face in all aspects of their life. To deny them of their right to education is to deny them their potential economic, social and human development.”

There is a clear lack of solid data as to the real number of Filipino children and youth with disabilities but one thing certain is that this general lack of reliable data on children and youth with disabilities further leads to their exclusion in mainstream social services such as education. More importantly, barriers that prevent or limit their access to mainstream educational opportunities should be identified and addressed to ensure that they have equal access to education and enable them to participate and achieve within inclusive settings.

Addressing barriers to education of children and youth with disabilities require both systemic and school level change. Below is an enumeration of issues and barriers raised and presented by Philippine Disability Peoples’ Organizations (DPOs) consulted by E-Net:

Lack of data. Existing data gathering activities of the Philippine Statistics Authority, National Statistical Coordination Board, the National Household Targeting Survey, and Departments such as the Department of Education, Health, Social Welfare and Development, Labor and Employment, Trade and Industry etc. for e.g., Conditional Cash Transfer (4Ps poverty reduction project) and other national programs, do not gather comprehensive, usable disability aggregated data. (Parallel Report to UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Phil. Coalition on the UNCRPD).

In education, available data on children with disabilities are usually the children who are already part of the school system. Data on Out of School Children and Youth (OSCY) with disabilities are lacking and this has not been efficiently addressed.

Enforcement of legislation and translating policies into action plans. Specific to education, Article 24 of the UNCRPD provides the provisions that must be upheld and implemented by governments to ensure development of more equitable and inclusive education systems for persons with disabilities. Concrete translation of Article 24 in the national education plan is what is lacking – creating a CRPD-compliant national plan of action, establishing infrastructure and capacity to implement the plan. This is key to inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in education.

Inadequate funding and resources. The Philippine Coalition on the UNCRPD, in its 2013 Parallel Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, on “Enabling CRPD-compliant Budget Advocacy” mentioned that for 2011, disability-specific appropriation for children with disabilities was estimated to be only 0.44% of the DepEd budget. It cited that among the children with “special needs” who are enrolled, lower budget allocations are given to children with disabilities. Only 16% and 9% of 609 poor municipalities have SPED Centers & schools respectively.

School problems. Children and youth with disabilities who are able to enter school continue to encounter barriers related to curriculum and pedagogy; inadequate training and support for teachers; physical barriers such as lack of ramps and/or elevators in multi-level school buildings, lack of wide doorways and spacious hallways and/or inaccessible transportation to and from school. They continue to face negative attitudes and stereotypes in the education system. Violence against students with disabilities – by teachers, other staff, and fellow students – is common in educational settings.

Recommendations – A CRPD-Compliant Inclusive Education

Since its inception, the Civil Society Network for Education Reforms or E-Net Philippines has been committed to expand and strengthen civil society participation in reforming the Philippine education system and in developing alternative learning systems with special concern for the marginalized, excluded and vulnerable sectors, including persons with disabilities.

The following recommendations were developed through a series of learning sessions and workshops initiated by E-Net Philippines in cooperation with disability people's organizations covering various disability constituencies. (see below)



Compliance to International Laws and Policies on Inclusive Education

Inclusive Education is a learning environment where children with and without disabilities are taught together, as equals.



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- Uphold and implement the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD);
- Consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations in all aspects of implementing the Convention, including policy development processes, monitoring and evaluation and compliance;
- Implement or introduce legislation, based on the human rights model of disability that fully complies with Article 24;
- Adopt clear policies and practices to achieve inclusive education and policies that commit to reasonable accommodation at national, local and education institution levels;
- Formulate national guidelines to implement the directive of RA 10410, and Mother Tongue Based - Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy in application to the use of Filipino Sign Language for deaf students.

Philippine Coalition on the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Philippine Deaf Resource Center, Philippine Federation for the Deaf, Philippine Blind Union, Philippine National Association of Sign Language Interpreters (PNASLI), Philippine Chamber of Massage Industry for Visually Impaired (PCMIVI), Life Haven, Angels of Peace, Philippine Partnership for Children with Disabilities, NORFIL Foundation, Center for Partnership and Development School for the Deaf and Applied Studies-St. Benilde, Philippine Advocates for Visually-Impaired Children (PAVIC), Deaf Blind Support Philippines, Philippine Alliance of Women with Disabilities, Resources for the Blind Inc.

Increase Per Capita Investment in the Education of Children and Persons with Disabilities

- Sufficient budget for a broader availability of educational places for learners with disabilities at all levels; **Alternative Learning System (ALS)** as a critical strategy both as a transitional as well as long term complement of formal education service delivery for children and persons with disabilities;
- Sufficient budget for general availability of services and facilities within the general education system including, the provision of sufficiently trained and supported teaching staff, school counselors, psychologists, and other relevant health and social service professionals, as well as access to scholarships and other financial resources;
- Effective utilization of appropriations such as the unused P100 million appropriations for Instructional Materials and Textbooks for the Handicapped.

Safe, Accessible and Supportive Educational Environment, Infrastructures and Facilities

- Availability of services and facilities which are inclusive, accessible and safe such as water and sanitation facilities, including hygiene and toilet facilities; school cafeterias; and recreational spaces;
- Compliance with provisions of Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 or An Act to Enhance the Mobility of Disabled Persons by Requiring Certain Buildings, Institutions, Establishments and Public Utilities to Install Facilities and Other Devices such as ramps, handrails, etc.

Gender and Disability Sensitive Environment, Curriculum and Instructional/Learning Materials

- Adopt appropriate measures to prevent all forms of violence and abuse towards persons with disabilities, including bullying and sexual violence. Sensitization among the general population (typically developing children, adults working with children, community members, etc.) should be an important component of programs and measures to be implemented;
- Consult & involve persons with disabilities in development of curricula, instructional materials and technologies which are gender-sensitive and appropriate for specific needs of persons with disabilities/children and youth with disabilities and make them fully accessible for use in both formal education and alternative learning systems;

Inclusion in Decision-Making and Governance

- Representation of persons with disabilities, including children and youth, in DepEd units for education of children and youth with disabilities;
- Representation of persons with disabilities/ children and youth with disabilities in the Local School Board and decision-making in the appropriation of education fund for learners with disabilities in all governing bodies;
- Children/Persons with disabilities must have a representation in the Child Protection Councils.

Well-Trained and Supported Teaching and Non-Teaching Personnel

- Fund and employ an adequate number of qualified and committed school staff – administration, teaching and non-teaching trained in inclusive education based on the human rights model of disability;
- Active recruitment of teachers with disabilities;
- Investment in continuous inclusive teacher education and preparation programs, curriculum revisions and adaptations (inclusive education courses/training for pre-service and in-service teachers);
- For the deaf, content and design of pre and in-service training programs in Filipino Sign Language for teachers;
- Establish Resource Center for Teachers;

Reliable and Appropriate Information and Statistical Data and Research

- Ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded in the Census, in Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plans, and all other national and local data gathering activities;
- Data pertaining to persons with disabilities should be disaggregated at the national and local levels as appropriate - data collection should include children with disabilities who are Out of School Children and Youth;
- Include mechanism for information sharing among national government agencies, DPOs, INGOs, LGUs, etc. and other actors that work with and address the need of people with disabilities;
- Provide for transparency of all budget-related data especially relevant to ensuring inclusive education.

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