1

THE CHALLENGE
Reforms and increasing investments sustained over many years have resulted in improved access to basic education (basic ed) in the country.

There are almost 62 thousand schools nationwide catering to 27 million students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 as of School Year (SY) 2018-2019. Department of Education (DepEd) accounts for 3 out of 4 of these schools and services 4 out of 5 students (LIS).

Participation rates are up, and cohort survival and completion rates show impressive improvements. The dropout rate is on the decline.

Beginning SY 2016-2017, the K to 12 Program provided services to Senior High School (SHS) learners in the public and private sectors through free or highly subsidized SHS education.

- SHS performed very well contrary to initial fears that drop out rates would increase.
  - Whereas in the past less than half of Fourth Year High School graduates proceeded to college, the transition rate from Grade 10 to Grade 11 in the first three years of K to 12 had been high at 93%, 90%, and 96%, respectively (LIS).
  - Moreover, the K to 12 Program saw a surge in Balik-Aral learners. The number of school returnees more than doubled in SY 2016-2017 (the first year of SHS) from the previous SY (LIS).

Even as gains in access to education have been achieved, DepEd still has yet to reach universal enrollment of school-age children and youth. A significant portion of the population is still without basic ed already.

These segments constitute a challenge for DepEd to reach:

- Out-of-school children, or persons aged 6 to 14 years who are not attending school
- Out-of-school youth (OSY), or persons aged 15 to 24 years who are not attending school, have not finished any college or post-secondary course, and are not working
Locating the Out-of-School Children and Youth and Adults without Basic Education

DepEd takes on the challenging task of reaching out to over 3.5 million of the population who are considered out-of-school children and youth (OSCY). This represents 9.1% of the 39 million population aged 6 to 24 years old (APIS 2017).

For its purposes, DepEd finds limiting the official definition and count of OSCY for the following reasons:

- It does not precisely reflect the extent of the OSCY covered by DepEd’s mandate.
- It is difficult to ascertain what percentage of the school-age population has yet to finish basic ed. The OSCY definition includes both high school and college-age students but only indicates that they have not finished college/post-secondary course.
- The definition does not include among the OSCY those who are working, even though they have not completed high school.
- The count stops at age 24, and does not cover older adults who were unable to finish basic ed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Employed</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-17 years</td>
<td>360,118</td>
<td>1,000,744</td>
<td>1,360,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-17 years</td>
<td>990,987</td>
<td>3,427,226</td>
<td>4,418,213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 6-17</td>
<td>1,351,096</td>
<td>4,427,449</td>
<td>5,778,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-30 years</td>
<td>1,530,615</td>
<td>4,394,472</td>
<td>5,925,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-59 years</td>
<td>3,385,946</td>
<td>9,672,246</td>
<td>13,058,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 31-59</td>
<td>4,910,621</td>
<td>14,366,522</td>
<td>19,277,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+ years</td>
<td>1,959,335</td>
<td>3,385,946</td>
<td>5,345,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 60+</td>
<td>4,869,956</td>
<td>12,752,468</td>
<td>17,622,424</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Computed from APIS 2017 data
A Better Count

For DepEd to truly serve its mandate of delivering basic ed for all, it needed to determine the correct statistics for the following:

- the magnitude of basic ed-age children and youth who are out of school
- adults who have not finished basic ed

A detailed analysis of official data generated these:

- There are 20.7 million Filipinos who have not completed basic ed. Less than a tenth (1.4 million) of them are of basic ed age (6-17 years old) and are out-of-school. 19 million are adults.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-17</td>
<td>Children and youth aged 6 to 17 years old who are out of school and have not completed basic ed whether unemployed or employed total 1.43 million (see Table 1-1).</td>
<td>1.43M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-17</td>
<td>Almost half a million youth aged 15 to 17 are out-of-school but are employed.</td>
<td>15-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18+</td>
<td>In the 18 years old and above population there is a significant segment that has yet to finish basic ed.</td>
<td>18+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11M</td>
<td>There are more male adults than females who have not completed basic ed (11 million versus 8.3 million).</td>
<td>11M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-30</td>
<td>Female adults 18 to 30 years old who have not finished basic ed are three times more likely to be unemployed than their male counterparts.</td>
<td>18-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-59</td>
<td>Older male adults (31 to 59 years old) are twice as likely to be unemployed as their female counterparts.</td>
<td>31-59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tackling Reasons for Not Being in School

The main reasons why these children and youth are out of school have less to do with the accessibility of schools than they do with personal and family reasons (see Figure 1-1).

**Figure 1-1. Distribution of OSCY by Reason for Not Attending School, 2017**

- **0.9%** Accessibility of school
- **24.7%** Lack of personal interest
- **8.4%** Employment/looking for work
- **17.9%** High cost of education/financial concern
- **7.8%** Illness/disability
- **37%** Marriage/family matters

Source: APIS 2017

**Figure 1-2. Percent Distribution of OSCY by Per Capita Income Decile and Sex, 2017**

- **75.7%**

Source: APIS 2017
The Challenge

- Accessibility of schools is a problem for less than one percent, most of whom are in the 6 to 11 years old cohort.

- Lack of personal interest is cited by a quarter, and predominantly male, of the OSCY population as reason for quitting school. This reason is most pronounced in the 12 to 15 age group, where 2 out of 3 dropped out of school for lack of interest.

- The biggest reason cited for not continuing school is marriage or family matters, affecting 16 to 24 year old females the most.

- As OSCY grow older or go higher the presumed education level, concerns over finances and the high cost of education become more pronounced.

- Poverty is also a big factor for not attending, dropping out, and staying out of school. Figure 1-2 shows that 76% of the OSCY belong to the poorer half of the population.

DepEd takes the picture painted by this detailed analysis seriously. It sees the challenge not just as an issue of numbers. Not completing basic ed has social and economic ramifications that stay with affected Filipinos far into their adulthood.

Towards Better Interventions

After substantial gains in access to education, Secretary Briones believes that DepEd is now in a better position to wage a decisive campaign for a major upgrade in education quality.

DepEd is better prepared now to offer programs that address the dropout rates, and adjust the learning experience so that learners, no matter their status and circumstances in life, have more incentives and greater capacity to stay in and complete basic ed.

For those who are unable to finish basic ed through the formal system, DepEd reaches out to them through non-formal education (NFE) under the Alternative Learning System (ALS).

References
