



# Discussion Paper

On Access to and Quality of Education:

The perennial problems of  
basic education and how do we  
go beyond business as usual



# CSC-CRC

CIVIL SOCIETY COALITION ON THE  
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD INC.

The Civil Society Coalition on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CSC-CRC) Inc., formerly known as the Philippine NGO Coalition on the UN CRC is composed of 17 local and international non-government organizations, namely, ChildFund Philippines, Child Hope Asia, Consuelo Foundation, ECPAT Philippines, ERDA Foundation, Fundacion Educacion Y Cooperacion (EDUCO), Good Neighbors International Philippines, John J. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues (ICSI), Kindernothisilfe Ev. Philippines (KNH), Open Heart Foundation, Philippines Against Child Trafficking (PACT), Plan International Philippines, Salinlahi Alliance for Children's Concerns, Save the Children, Unang Hakbang Foundation, VIDES Philippines Volunteers Foundation Inc., and World Vision Development Foundation, Inc.

The CSC-CRC leads civil society efforts towards strengthening government accountability for children's rights through systematic monitoring of the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Philippines. It has been submitting periodic reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child following the Philippines' ratification of the UN CRC in 1990.

# Discussion Paper

On Access to and Quality of Education:  
The perennial problems of basic education and  
how do we go beyond business as usual

November 2016

This is the first of a six-part series on the CSC-CRC's six-point agenda on Inclusive Quality Education; Improving Public Investments for Children; No to Lowering of Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility; Ensuring Children's Meaningful Participation in Governance; Functional Local Councils for the Protection of Children; and Increasing the Age of Sexual Consent.

The Coalition shall come out with a Discussion Paper for each of its advocacy themes every quarter.

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## List of Acronyms

A & E	Accreditation and Equivalency
ALS	Alternative Learning System
CWD	Children with Disabilities
DepEd	Department of Education
DRRM	Disaster Risk Reduction and Management
EFA	Education For All
IP	Indigenous People
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
LGU	Local Government Unit
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOOE	Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
NAT	National Achievement Test
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Education is an indispensable means for children to realize their potential, attain well-being and promote the well-being of others, and participate in society in improving itself. That everyone should have the opportunity for education is enshrined in human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>1</sup>, the United Nations on the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>2</sup>, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.<sup>3</sup>

The role of education in human development is recognized in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>4</sup> which aimed for universal access for primary education. The year 2015 marked the end for achieving this goal. While progress has been made in the Philippine government's efforts to provide education for all, the results also highlighted inequalities in enjoyment of this right as children from poor families, children with disabilities, children from indigenous communities, children in disaster-prone and conflict areas are not able to fully access nor fully enjoy quality education. The new global development agenda Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in education aims to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

As a signatory to all five international agreements,<sup>3</sup> the Philippine government is accountable for their realization.

The Philippine Constitution (Article XIV) itself mandates the State to provide free basic education for all Filipinos and allocate the biggest share of the national budget to education.

## What has been done for education so far?

The Philippine government has responded to the challenge of the international obligations from the UDHR to the MDGs on education with a fairly adequate policy environment and an increasing budget. It has instituted policies geared towards improving access to early childhood education, basic education, technical-vocational education, and non-formal and informal education.<sup>5</sup> Programs and coordinating bodies were established to create equity for education among minority groups such as Muslims, children in indigenous communities, children with special needs<sup>6</sup>, and the very poor<sup>7</sup>. Management practices for effective service delivery such as the School-Based Management system has also been institutionalized. Its biggest feat is institutionalizing the K - 12 Program<sup>7</sup>, whose main feature is the addition of two years in basic education to bring the country's basic education cycle at par with the others.

The K - 12 Program likewise responds to the goals of education for sustainable development specified in SDG 4. Moreover, DepEd has instituted the school-based Disaster Risk Reduction Management<sup>8</sup> and the Child Protection Policy<sup>9</sup>, in order to provide further protection for children in the schools. The Conditional Cash Transfer program on the other hand aimed to support school attendance among the very poor.

The share of DepEd in the annual national budget has seen consistent increases.<sup>10</sup> This however is still under 3% of the country's GDP<sup>11</sup>, and is still far from the international standard expenditure of 4 – 6% of the GDP for education.

Based on data from DepEd<sup>12</sup>, the following were the new gains made so far:

- The teacher-student ratio and classroom-student ratio in primary school have improved from 1:41 to 1:33 and from 1:40 to 1:34 respectively in the past three years.
- Equity in school participation in primary level between the wealthy and the poor has been achieved two years ago.
- More recently, transition from Junior to Senior High School has been successful, with a rate of 96%.

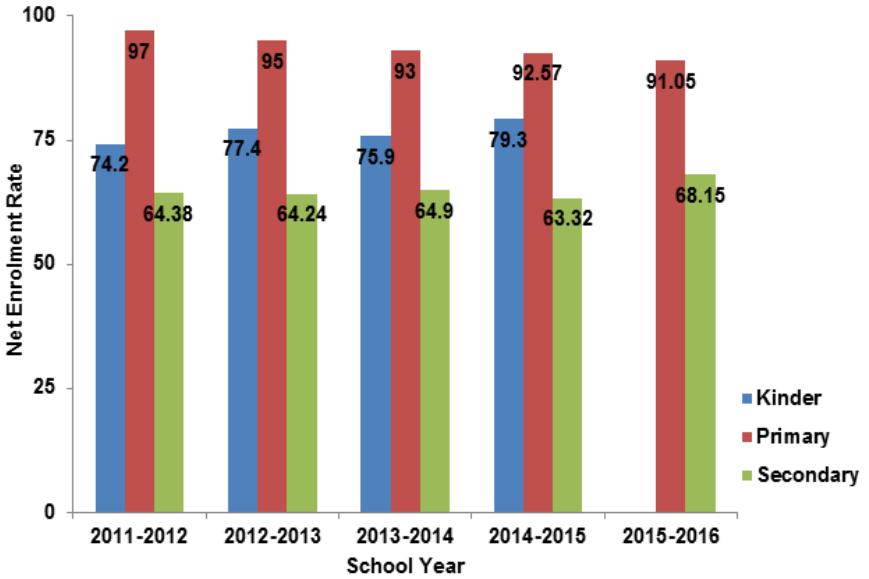
## What still need to be addressed?

Despite these efforts, progress in education has been slow, leading to the country's failure to achieve its MDG target of 100% completion of primary education by 2015. The inadequacies in the education system are evident in its various aspects:

***There are children still not being reached by the educational system.*** Throughout the years, the education system has been continuously missing out on a certain portion of children. The percentage is much higher in Kinder and in secondary education.

The percentage of children not participating in primary education on the other hand has been increasing in at least the past four years. (see Figure 1).

Fig. 1 Net Enrolment Rate in Kinder, Primary, and Secondary (S.Y. 2011-2012 to 2015-2016)



Source: DepEd, 2016

\*No NER for Kinder, 2015-2016

## Who are these children?

**CWD: 7 out of 10 are not in school**

(Save The Children Philippines, 2014)



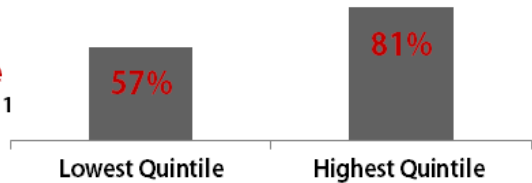
Children in Disaster Prone Areas:  
**EDUCATION OF**

**10 MILLION CHILDREN** disrupted because classrooms were used as evacuation centers (data in 2007 - 2011, Save The Children)

Children in Poor Households:

**Participation in Secondary School**

(Annual Poverty Indicator Survey 2014, as cited in Manasan, 2016)



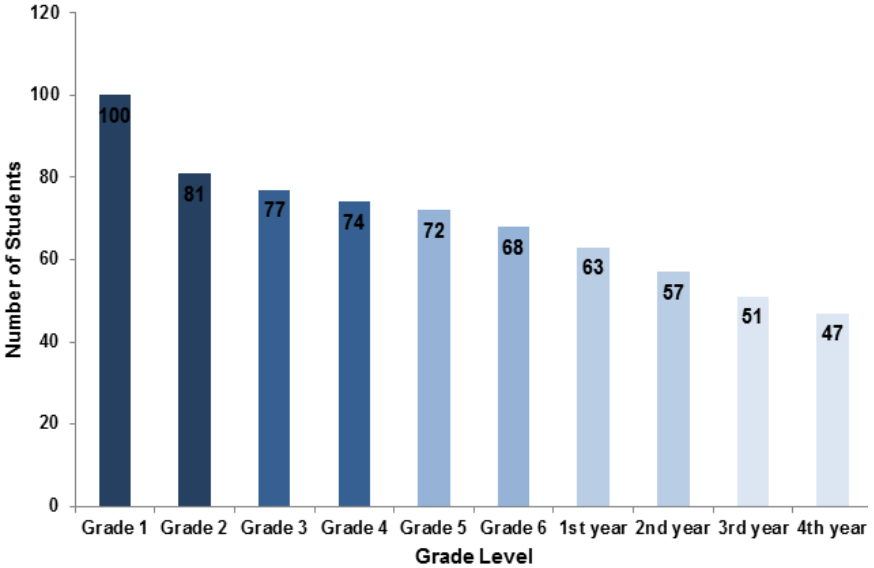
IP Children: In 51 Mangyan communities, **nearly 70% of school-aged children were not attending school** in 2011 (Plan International, n.d.)

Children in Conflict Areas:

**30 - 42% children are not in school** in ARMM, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Cotabato, and Lanao del Norte (DepEd, 2016).

**A significant portion of children are not finishing basic education.** For every 100 children who enter Grade 1, less than half finish high school. The decline in participation is progressive along the grade levels, with the sharpest decline occurring after the first year of school. The low participation in Kindergarten, which is designed to prepare children for Grade 1, could be a contributing factor to this. (see Figure 2)

Fig. 2 Progression of public school students in basic education (Grade 1 – 2004, 4<sup>th</sup> year – 2014)

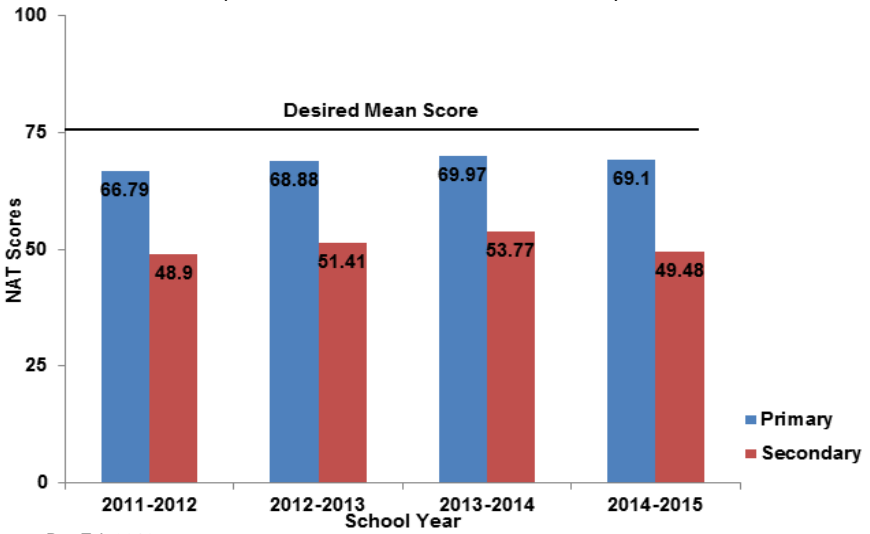


Source: DepEd as cited in ASPBAE, et al., 2016

**The general academic proficiency of students has yet to reach the standard.** Ten years after its implementation, the NAT mean scores in both primary and secondary schools have yet to attain the desired 75% set by the DepEd. The NAT mean scores in secondary education also show considerably poorer academic proficiency. (see Figure 3).



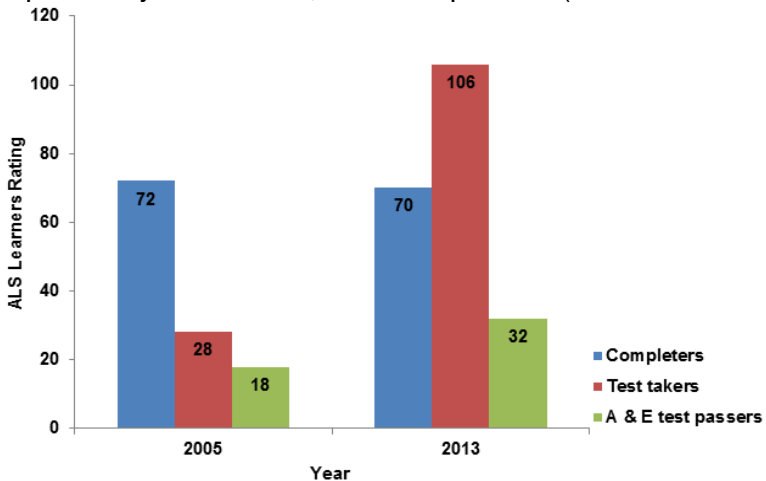
**Fig. 3 National Achievement Test Score in Primary and Secondary (S.Y. 2011-2012 to 2014-2015)**



Source: DepEd, 2016

***The alternative learning system has not been effective in providing parallel education to those outside formal school.*** The ALS is designed to provide non-formal and informal alternatives to those who are not in formal education. Access and quality of ALS however has not progressed much even from 10 years ago. Access has been quite low, while those finally benefitting from it through acquisition of equivalency certificate for formal primary and secondary education is even much lower. (see Figure 4).

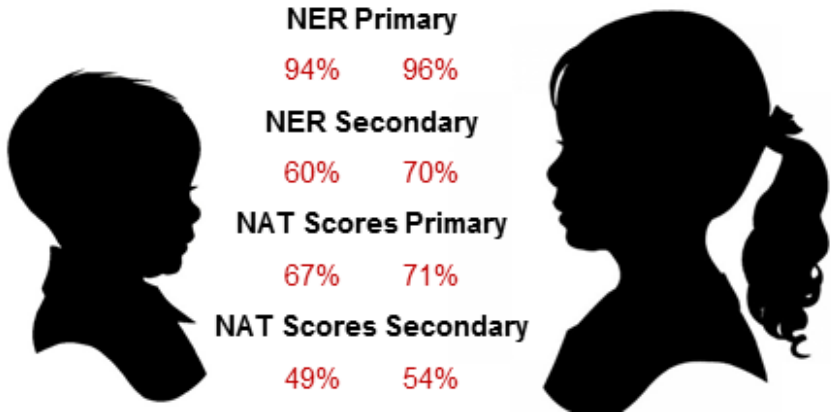
**Fig. 4 Alternative Learning System Completers, Accreditation and Equivalency Test-takers, and Test-passers (2005 and 2013)**



Source: EFA, 2015

***There has been gender inequality in favor of girls, especially at the secondary level.*** Contrary to prevailing international trends, boys benefit less from education than girls, in both access and quality. This is more pronounced in their much lower access to secondary education. (see Figure 5).

*Fig. 5 Net Enrolment Rate and National Achievement Test Scores of Boys and Girls in Primary and Secondary (S.Y. 2012-2013)*



Source: EFA, 2015

## Discussion

That Filipino children are missing out on their right to education has been a continuing discourse for decades, coinciding for the most part with education underspending and increasing poverty. The uptrend in the country's economy in recent years has brought some improvement in the education budget and outcomes, but these have been not enough to reverse the impact of long years of neglect.<sup>13</sup> Clearly, a lot more is being required.

The latest (2009) Concluding Observations of the Committee on the UNCRC urged the Philippine government to address these gaps in education, through, among others, providing schooling opportunities in most remote barangays and among vulnerable groups, disaggregating information on IPs and CWDs, and continuing to strengthen informal learning and vocational education for employment and citizenship. A recent ICESCR monitoring report<sup>14</sup> also recommends for the government to enhance transparency, accountability and participation, increase the budget on education to improve access and quality especially for the poor and those in rural areas, and provide education without hidden costs.

Gaps in education exist alongside the country's persistent poverty of over a fifth of the population. Poverty has been the major hindrance to accessing education. Ironically, it is also the way out of it.

Children are being pushed out across the various levels of the education system by reasons seemingly as simple as not having less than P100 for transportation, lunch money, school supplies, or school projects – which could also include items for school maintenance such as dustpans, floor wax, brooms, electric fans, and fencing.<sup>15</sup>

The long list of poverty-related barriers to accessing education has weighed students down for a long time: having to travel long distance or not having the money for transportation, not having a meal to sustain one's self through the school day, being malnourished and sickly, having to stay at home to care for siblings or having to work to augment the family income.<sup>16</sup>

Poverty is also linked to early pregnancy<sup>17</sup>, which, most recently, is the top reason for dropping out of school, affecting mainly girls<sup>18</sup>. Poverty is likewise the condition that gave rise to disaster prone and conflict areas where children are hindered from fully participating in education. Further, it is the same condition of most of children with disability and those in indigenous communities who are not able to fully enjoy their right to education. Children in far-lung areas, disaster-prone areas, conflict areas, indigenous communities and those with disability are further marginalized by the prevailing insufficient data, materials and/or teacher competencies that are needed to implement the policies designed to reach them.

The poor and other marginalized children go to public schools that are generally beset with dismal school facilities and inadequately trained teachers. These children do not get the education that they deserve. They then lose on an important opportunity to improve their lives.

## Voices of Children and Parents

*“Minsan nawawala po yung page (ng libro). Minsan po mahirap sabayan kasi yung katabi ko tapos ako nasa ibang page pa hindi po ako nakakasulat.”*

*“Pinapagalitan po (ng teacher). Bakit daw hindi ako sumusulat. Kasi po wala ng ballpen. Hindi pa nakakabili. Wala pong pera. Kasi naglalabada pa si Mama, hapon na nauwi. Sabi nya po hindi niya (teacher) po ako mapapahiram kasi marami po kami.”*

*“Nahuli po kasi sa pag pa-enroll. Kasi hindi pa po ako nabilhan ng gamit sa school. Kasi di pa po sigurado kung makakapag aral po ako. Kaya uunahin po yong kakainin namin.”*

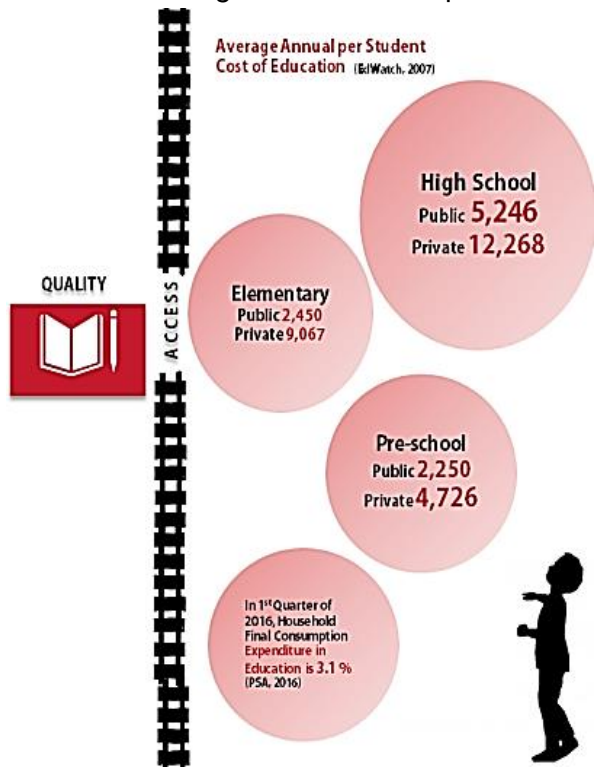
*“Ang high school ang talagang problema ko kasi malayong malayo. Pag umuulan, wala silang kapote, walang payong, nababasa. Hindi po naman inexpect ang income namin kasi minsan ang asawa ko nag ba-buy and sell ng baboy minsan dalawang linggo bago bayaran. Paanu na ang pangkain namin? Tapos panggastos pa sa mga estudyante araw araw. Minsan naglalako ng isda, Kung meron, nakakalako... kung wala naman, wala talaga.”*

Source: Educo. 2015

Meanwhile, reasons for the gender inequality in favor of girls have not been adequately established. The trend has been noted in various studies and reasons put forward, but causality has not been directly established.

It is regrettable that these gaps in education exist despite DepEd’s virtually complete line-up of programs for the varying types of learners as well as supporting management strategies for the delivery of education services.

Implementations of these programs have been limited. Apparently the reason is lack of budget. On the other hand, even the inadequate budget is not being fully utilized. Implementation is delayed by issues on efficiency,



e.g., long procurement process. There are also issues about effective targeting, e.g., higher budget allocations to less needy schools.<sup>19</sup>

The delays in execution and inefficiencies in targeting exacerbate the inadequacy of the education budget in making quality learning accessible to all, especially to the marginalized children. **Inequality is perpetuated when the poor get less education than the non-poor.**

The new DepEd administration has responded by acknowledging the administrative bottlenecks in implementation and committed to institute measures to remove these.<sup>20</sup> It has also identified the Alternative Learning System as a flagship program to address the large number of out-of-school children and youth.<sup>21</sup>

DepEd does have to contend with the country's young and fast rising population as well as with disasters that are a regular occurrence in the country. Both tend to set back the gains made in the delivery of education and elsewhere in the basic services. And yet, at the same time, education has the potential to help confront and mitigate the impact of these.

The new administration has the opportunity and the responsibility to capitalize on the gains made before, and to set the bar higher.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Much has been proposed to solve the problems in education. Outside of poverty eradication, the overarching call is for DepEd to focus on the effective and efficient implementation of its plans and programs, and putting funds in its policies, especially in providing equitable opportunities to access to education.

**This paper would like to highlight a number of recommendations to the Department of Education:**

### *Reaching the unreached*

1. Ensure institutionalization of inclusiveness and equity through equitable financing based on proper targeting.
2. Accelerate collection of disaggregated data on marginalized children, particularly children with disability, children in indigenous communities, and children living in very remote areas.

### *Making children stay in the educational system*

3. Popularize and broadly implement the Alternative Delivery Modes and Alternative Learning System. Corollary to this, intensify the recruitment and training of mobile teachers and community-based facilitators; and the production of self-learning modules.
4. Effectively minimize the cost of school projects and incidental school expenses. Related to this, the timely release and increase in the MOOE would remove the burden of subsidizing school maintenance from parents.
5. Fast-track the creation and improvement of road networks and school buildings for secondary schools and provide school service or dormitory accommodations for secondary students living in very remote areas.

### *Improving quality of education*

6. Incorporate child rights, inclusive education and education in emergencies in teachers' pre-service and in-service training.
7. Improve the reach and quality of teacher training.

### *Providing for gender equity*

8. Establish the factors for greater drop out and lower NAT scores for boys and provide interventions to address this.

### *Governance*

9. Widely implement the program for the establishment of the School Based Management (SBM) system, with meaningful participation of children.
10. Relatedly, coordinate with the LGUs for the enhanced functionality of Local School Boards that will help support SBMs.
11. To further strengthen stakeholder engagement, institute permanent mechanisms for stakeholder participation in planning and evaluation of education programs in both local and national levels of DepEd.
12. Enhance opportunities for the acquisition of livelihood skills among the youth who could assist in improving their family's economic situation through the K – 12 and ALS.
13. Strongly advocate to the national government for sustained increase in the education budget until the critical goals of universal access and quality education have been realized.

- <sup>1</sup> Article 26 (everyone has a right to education)
- <sup>2</sup> Article 28 (right to education) and Article 29 (aims of education)
- <sup>3</sup> Article 13 (the right of everyone to education)
- <sup>4</sup> MDG No. 2 Achieve universal primary education
- <sup>5</sup> These are, but not limited to, the following: Early Childhood Care and Development Act of 200 (RA 8980), Early Years Act of 2013 (RA 10410), Kindergarten Act of 2012 (RA10157), Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001 (RA 9155), Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533), Technical Education and Skills Development Act of 1994 (RA 7796)
- <sup>6</sup> These are the following: Madrasah Education Program, Indigenous Peoples Education Program and Indigenous People's Office, Special Education Program and Advisory Council for the Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (co-terminus with previous administration)
- <sup>7</sup> Conditional Cash Transfer program
- <sup>8</sup> . The Comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) in Basic Education Framework (DO 37, s. 2015)
- <sup>9</sup> DepEd Child Protection Policy (DO 40, s. 2012)
- <sup>10</sup> www.dbm.gov.ph
- <sup>11</sup> Raya, Rene (2016). Challenges in financing education, SDG 4/Education 2030. Education Network National Forum on SDG 4. Ateneo de Manila University. 22 September. [PDF]
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- <sup>13</sup> Educo & Psychosocial Support and Children's Rights Resource Center (2016). Education of children in Bicol: a child rights situational analysis (draft report).
- <sup>14</sup> CESCR Concluding observation on the combined fifth and sixth periodic report of the Philippines. Advanced Unedited Version. 7 October 2016. [PDF]
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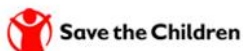
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Rm 208 Benigno Mayo Hall (ISO Bldg), Social Development Complex,  
Ateneo de Manila University, Katipunan Avenue, Loyola Heights,  
Quezon City, Philippines



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426-6001 loc 4662