



Unlocking the Potential of the Bangsamoro People through the Alternative Learning System¹ (Overview)²

Introduction

In 2018, after decades of conflicts, peace negotiations finally concluded with the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), recently approved through the 2019 Bangsamoro autonomy plebiscite, which is envisioned to have greater autonomy, more resources, and larger territory than its predecessor. The Bangsamoro People have high expectation to seize dividends of peace from this political transition process.

BARMM has faced serious challenges in both access and quality of basic education even while the Philippines as a whole has made remarkable progress in the basic education reform over past decades. In BARMM, only 1 out of every 10 students who began primary education completes junior high school (JHS) on time. Out-of-school youth and adults (OSYA) have thus accumulated over the generations. The share of OSYA among the 16-30 years-old population has been close to 45 percent in BARMM, double the national average. These figures point to a crisis in the delivery of basic education in the BARMM area – a crisis which needs to be addressed as a first priority to keep children in school and to provide better quality education to them. This will not only increase achievement but also abate the OSYA population.

Complementary to the efforts in provide quality education for Filipino children, the Alternative Learning System (ALS) has been operated by DepEd offering second-chance learning programs for the past few



The Alternative Learning System (ALS) consists of the (i) Basic Literacy Program (BLP) for teaching basic literacy skills; and the (ii) Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Programs for providing equivalent pathways for youths and adults who did not complete the formal basic education. Official certificates can be earned if learners would pass the A&E exams offered annually. While BARMM is autonomous, the same ALS program has been implemented there as in the rest of the country. In 2019, DepEd introduced the Enhanced ALS 2.0 program.

Box 1: Study on the Alternative Learning System in BARMM: Approach and Data

This study focuses on the following three areas: (a) the context of the formal basic education sector and ALS, (b) the ALS learners, such as their characteristics and skills profiles, as well as their paths after graduating from ALS; and (c) the ALS program delivery, particularly bottlenecks to its effective operation such as the overall public spending, teachers, learning modules, operational expenses, learning facilities, and program monitoring, as well as region-specific challenges.

Data for BARMM has been generally scarce, and when it comes to ALS, it has been the most challenging in terms of both availability and reliability. Besides the official data from DepEd and the Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA), a new survey was undertaken across the region in partnership with the DepEd Central Office and the former DepEd-ARMM. This ALS-BARMM Snapshot Survey was designed using those used in the past WB studies through careful contextualization and undertaken with ALS facilitators hired by DepEd and past and current learners chosen randomly. The Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) supported the data collection with supervision of WB team. Despite significant levels of security concerns and local conditions in certain areas, the data collection was generally successful.

The survey was undertaken between November 2018 and February 2019, and the sampling approach was designed based on the jurisdiction of ARMM (former BARMM). The official data such as DepEd, DBM, and PSA used in the report is of Year 2018 or before. The study uses Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, or BARMM, consistently to call the region to avoid confusion for those who are not fully familiar with the political process. The region has been in the transition process with the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), which was signed on July 31, 2018 by President Duterte, and the plebiscites in January and February 2019.

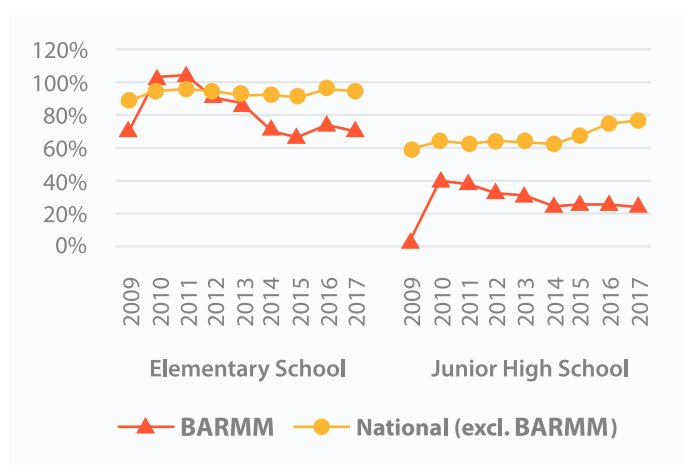
decades throughout the country for OSYA who have limited skills and bleak employment prospects. In 2018, over 840,000 enrolled in ALS nationally, out of which 25,000 enrolled in BARMM. ALS has been one of the key mechanisms for helping young people acquire the educational qualifications for the labor market which they could not acquire through the formal system.

Across developing countries, various ALS-type non-formal education programs have been implemented to teach basic literacy, provide equivalency education, or assess and certify skills acquired already for those who left education without attaining a qualification.³ These programs have been also relevant for conflict-affected areas particularly to support displaced peoples or refugees whose education was interrupted or who lost their qualification documents. By assessing and certifying learning and skills acquired already through these non-formal education programs, they are able to re-enter formal education and training, or integrate into the society and world of work in their host communities.⁴ However, the international evidence on adult education has been limited and generally suggest modest outcomes for program participants⁵, so strenuous efforts are needed to maximum the impact of ALS.

The World Bank has undertaken a series of evaluations of ALS with the Department of Education (DepEd) since 2013. The findings show significant and positive impacts on labor market outcomes among ALS learners who could pass the accreditation and equivalency (A&E) exam. Also, ALS learners utilize the official A&E certificates to pursue college, post-secondary vocational training, or formal employment. However, the research also identified key impediments to effective program delivery which have led to low system effectiveness and efficiency.

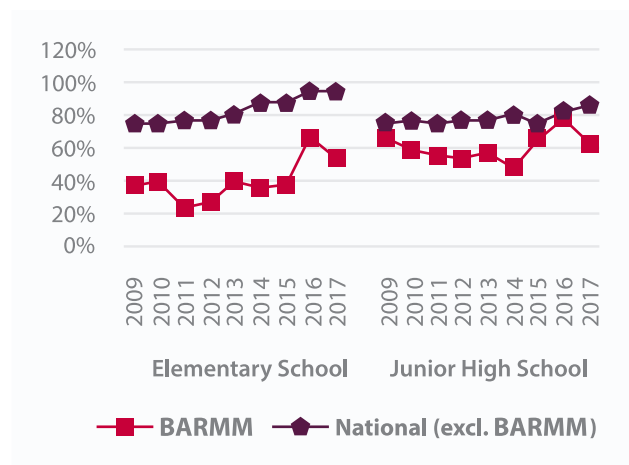
The previous evaluations of ALS have not to date covered the BARMM area. This study fills that gap and aims to provide the new BARMM government essential evidence based on new data for designing and undertaking reform interventions to improve the program delivery for its beneficiaries. (see Box 1)

Figure 1: Net Enrollment Rate Trend of BARMM and Nationwide, 2009–2017



Source: EBIES, DepEd, 2009-2017.

Figure 2: School Completion Rate Trend of BARMM and Nationwide, 2009–2017



Formal School System and ALS in BARMM

Basic Education Context

The Philippines made remarkable progress in implementing its basic education reforms in the past decades, demonstrating improvement in various indicators, but at the same time, the system has faced many challenges. One of the major problems observed in the past decades is high dropout rates, especially in secondary education. Hence, the necessity of having a second-chance program to certify educational attainment outside the formal school system is closely associated with the formal school system and its challenges in the Philippines.

Across all levels of the formal basic education, BARMM consistently had the lowest participation and completion rates among all regions. In 2017, the Net Enrollment Rate (NER) in BARMM fell below the national average by about 20 percentage points at the elementary level and 45 percentage points at the JHS level (Figure 1). In BARMM, the elementary school completion rate was 54 percent against a national average of 94 percent in 2017. At the JHS level, around 62 percent of Grade 7 students continued to study until Grade 10 in BARMM while the national average JHS completion rate was 85 percent (Figure 2). In other words, only 1 out of every 10 students who began primary education in BARMM would eventually graduate from JHS on time, and this situation remains unchanged over the last decade.

The characteristics of ALS learners in BARMM also demonstrate the crisis in basic education (as set out in more detail below). Only about half of ALS secondary-level learners were able to solve simple math questions such as multiplying or dividing a two-digit by a one-digit number, compared to 80 percent of the total OSYA population. And despite basic education being nominally free, financial difficulties of families appear to be the top reason for ALS learners in BARMM to drop out of or never enroll in schools.

These figures point to a crisis in the delivery of basic education in the BARMM area – a crisis which needs to be addressed directly to provide better quality education to its young people and to avoid further increasing the OSYA population.

ALS Context and Performance

Out-of-School Youth and Adults

The estimated size of the out-of-school population between ages 16 to 30 is around 6.5 million across the country with 500,000 in BARMM (Table 1).⁶ The share to the total population in their age cohort is around 23 percent nationwide but is double (46 percent) in BARMM. It is also important to note that OSYA in Maguindanao, Sulu, and Basilan provinces in BARMM outnumber those in the same age cohorts who successfully completed basic education.

Table 1: Summary of Out-of-School Population: Nationwide and in BARMM

Age group	OSYA Nationwide		OSYA in BARMM	
	Number	% in age cohort*	Number	% in age cohort*
Youth (16-24 years old)	3,419,000	19%	276,000	38%
Young adults (25-30 years old)	3,157,000	30%	233,000	62%
Total (16-30 years old)	6,576,000	23%	509,000	46%

Source: Labor Force Survey, 2018, World Bank staff calculation.

Note: *Share of people who are out of school and below respective age-appropriate school grade in the total age 16-30 population.

Out-of-School Children

Based on the national household survey data, the number of young children (ages 6-11) who are not in school and below respective age-appropriate grade is estimated around 49,000 across BARMM despite laws requiring their attendance. There are three different approaches to addressing the needs of this population. The first approach is to finding ways to get these children back into regular schools and learn with their peers. This is the most effective educational approach for these children, even while presenting challenges for teachers and schools. DepEd also operates an Alternative Delivery Mode (ADM), which provides school-based interventions to support students who are at risk of dropping out by offering flexible learning modalities while they are still in school. ADM follows the K-12 basic education curriculum, which is structured distinctly from the ALS curriculum.

However, the scale of the ADM operation is still very small throughout the country⁷ and has not been fully rolled out across BARMM. Its expansion should be one of the key priorities for the new government, as stated accordingly in the five-year BARMM ALM⁸ Roadmap. Moreover, there is a significant lack of regular schools accessible to all the school-age population of BARMM (BARMM still has over 250 barangays which do not have any public elementary schools in 2018⁹). The second approach, in conflict-affected areas which do not have public schools, is for the government partnership with other partners through a contractual or voucher mechanism could be used but has not been fully sought in BARMM. The Australian government funded the BEAM project which piloted ADM in ARMM in 2012, which shows that, in the conflict-affected areas, this model has been demonstrated as means to reach out to out-of-school youth.

Given the reality of the educational landscape, a third approach has emerged which is for children of school age to enroll in ALS, especially in the Accreditation and Equivalency program. As noted, this is the least satisfactory option but is a reality with which the ALS in BARMM will have to cope for some time.

Participation and Completion Rate in ALS

ALS participation and completion rates in BARMM are about half the rates for the country as a whole. National ALS enrollment has increased more than seven-fold between 2005 and 2018, from 106,000 to 840,000 across the country. In BARMM, the number of ALS learners grew at an even faster rate from 2,300 to 25,000 during the same period. The current ALS participation rate is estimated around 13 percent nationwide, but it is only 5 percent in BARMM (Table 3). Clearly, BARMM is seriously lagging while it has the largest share of OSYA.

According to the official data by DepEd, while around 65-70 percent of those enrolled in ALS complete their learning across the country, the ALS completion rate in BARMM is around 35 percent.¹⁰ Among all of the ALS programs, the completion rates of the A&E Elementary and Secondary level programs in BARMM are significantly lower than the national level (Table 3).

A&E Certification Rate

Pass rate in the A&E exam remains significantly lower in BARMM than the national average (Figure 3). In 2018, BARMM's A&E passing rates for the A&E Elementary and Secondary levels were behind the national average by only

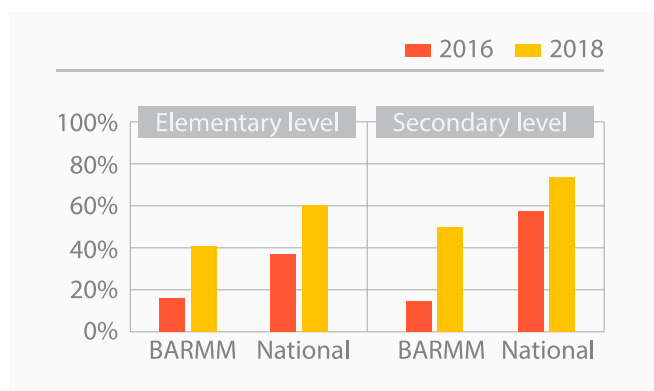
Table 3: ALS Participation and Completion Rate of BARMM and National Average

	Year	Nationwide	BARMM
Participation Rate (Overall)	2018	13%	5%
Completion Rate (Overall)	2017	67%	36%
BLP	2017	56%	40%
A&E Elementary	2017	61%	28%
A&E Secondary	2017	70%	37%

Sources: For participation rate - LFS (2018), DepEd LIS data (2018). For completion rate - LIS 2017; DepEd.

20 and 24 percentage points, respectively. While the number of the A&E passers in BARMM continued to grow marginally between 2016 and 2018, the A&E takers continued substantially declining during the same period even though the total number of ALS learners has been rising quickly.

Figure 3: Share of Passers Among Those Who Took A&E Exams for Elementary and Secondary Levels



Source: A&E test results, 2016 and 2018, Bureau of Educational Assessment, DepEd.

ALS Learners, Skills and Aspirations

This section presents findings on the ALS learners from the 2018 ALS-BARMM Snapshot Survey to discuss their basic profiles, time commitment, skills, and aspiration for learning in ALS.

Who are the ALS learners in BARMM?

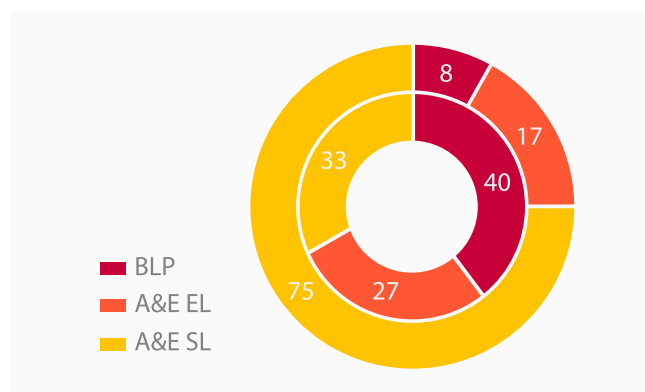
BLP accounts for 40 percent of ALS learners in BARMM while the A&E Secondary and Elementary programs share the rest

of the learners (Figure 4). Across the country, BLP accounts for less than 10 percent and has been declining while the vast majority, or 75 percent, enroll in the A&E Secondary program.

Characteristics of ALS learners in BARMM somewhat differ from ALS learners across the country. While the clear majority of ALS learners are youth and young adults throughout the country, but their ages are distributed more widely in BARMM. Two-thirds of ALS learners in BARMM are female while the majority of ALS learners are males nationwide. Also, 60 percent of learners in BARMM are unemployed or inactive at the time of ALS enrollment, which is significantly higher than other areas. Their basic characteristics are presented in Table 5.

ALS learners who are married, particularly female learners, tend to be much older. There is a 15-year gap in the average

Figure 4: Share of Learners by ALS Program, BARMM (Inner ring), and Nationwide (Outer ring)



Source: DepEd LIS Data (2018).
Note: Outer ring represents nationwide, inner ring represents BARMM (Figure 18).

Table 5: Profiles of ALS Learner Sample in BARMM

Question Criteria	Snapshot BARMM	Benchmarks		
		Nationwide	Nationwide	Greater Metro Manila
	2018	2015	2017	2013
Age (mean)	28	28	23	24
Age (median)	24	23	21	21
Share of female	66%	47%	44%	43%
Participants who ever enrolled in the formal schools	88%	96%	99%	99%
Participants who worked for pay when enrolled in ALS.	38%	47%	55%	86%

Sources: National ALS survey, 2015, DepEd/WB; National Snapshot, 2017, WB; NCR-plus survey, 2013.

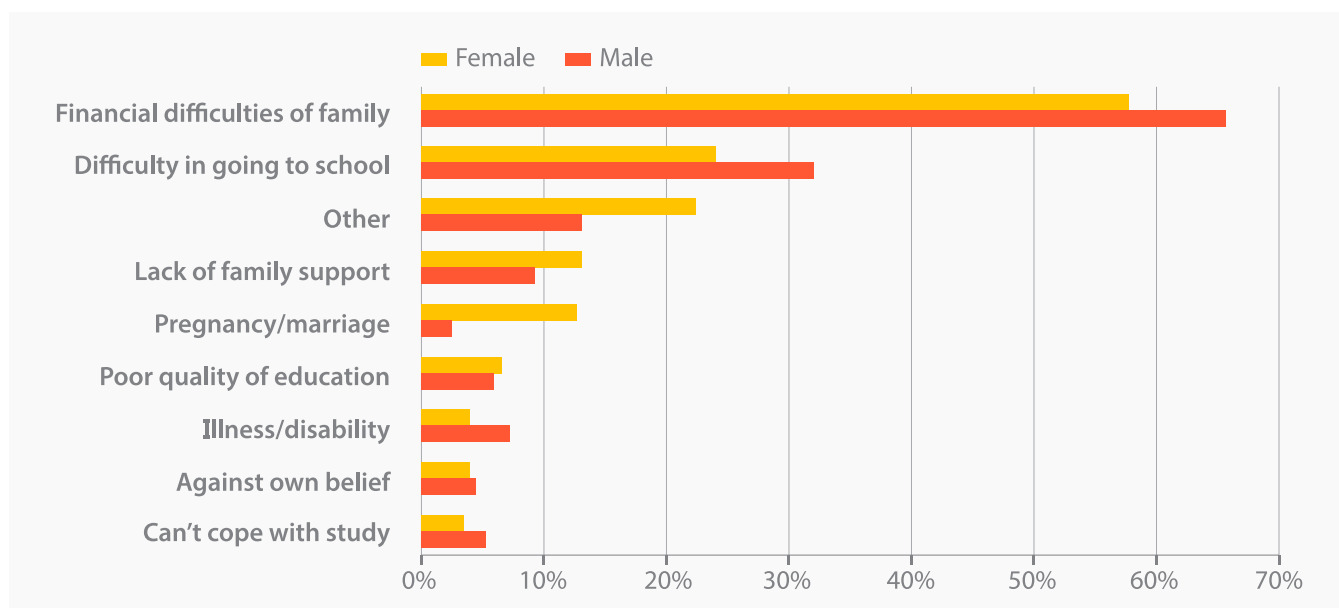
Note: * includes selected region/province across the country.

enrollment age of learners for married as against unmarried learners. The average age for male and female learners who are not yet married is just around 20 years old, but the majority of female learners are married and concentrated around 35 years old. This suggests that female learners face family responsibility such as housekeeping and childcare and thus tend to defer enrolling in ALS until their children start attending schools. On the other hand, the majority of male learners are not married and largely in their early 20s.

There are many older and female learners who have no grades completed and thus lack basic literacy skills. About

40 percent of ALS female aged 30 or above did not even achieve the first grade in the formal school. In contrast, over 60 percent of younger and both male and female learners completed elementary school but did not enroll or complete JHS.

Financial difficulties of families appear to be the top reason for dropping out or never enrolling in schools among the ALS learners in BARMM. Distance and security concerns in accessing schools were the second most common reason for not attending reported by one-third of ALS learners. It is also important to note that significant minority of ALS

Figure 5: Top Two Reasons for Dropping Out of School


Source: ALS-BARMM Snapshot Survey 2018, World Bank.

Note: The graph shows shares of the respondents citing the top two dropout reasons, and thus the numbers add up to more than 100 percent.

learners, particularly females, reported that lack of support or understanding of family for education, as well as early marriage as a significant reason for not completing their education (Figure 5).

Also, efforts by schools to prevent and follow up with dropouts are rather limited. Only one-third of ALS learners talked to teachers or other school staff about their intention of dropping out from school. However, the rest just left school without informing any school personnel. Also, two-thirds of the ALS learners were never contacted by teachers or school staff after they stopped attending schools. Fortunately, at least half of all learners reported that they had some follow-ups from community members after they dropped out, pointing to the potential role of the community as an advocate for continuation of schooling and participation in ALS.

Skills of ALS Learners in BARMM

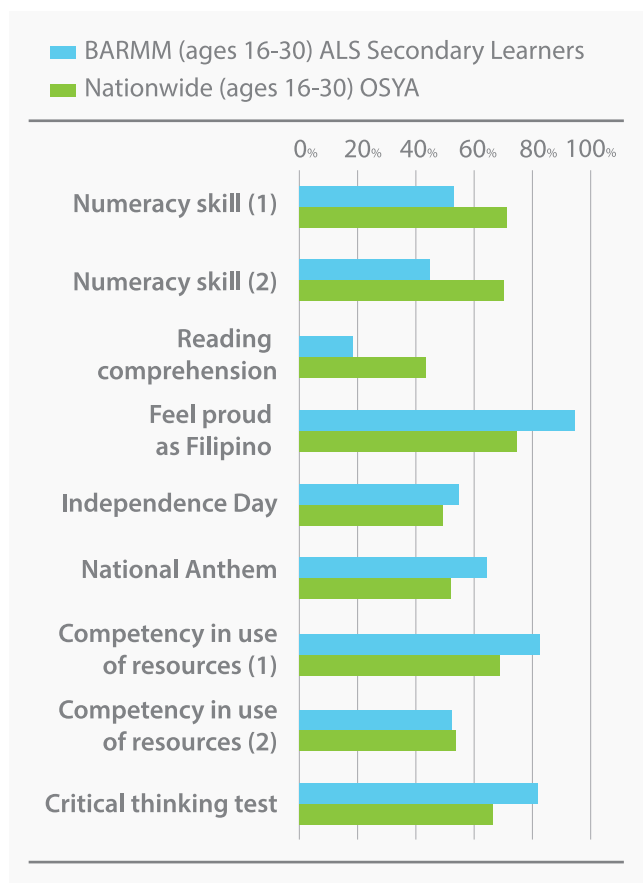
This study assessed the academic skills (specifically functional literacy¹¹) and socioemotional skills of ALS learners in BARMM. Note that the measured skills are not attributable to the impact of ALS program, but merely provide objective information about ALS learners.

Functional Literacy Skills

The data shows that the basic reading and math skills of ALS learners in BARMM are seriously low (Figure 6). For example, about half of ALS Secondary-level learners were only able to solve simple math questions such as multiplying or dividing a two-digit number by a one-digit number while 80 percent of total OSYA of the same age cohorts were able to respond. Also, only 20 percent of ALS Secondary-level learners in BARMM could answer a simple reading comprehension question while over 60 percent of OSYA nationwide responded correctly. BARMM is ethnically diverse with many local languages, which may be one of key contributing factors to significantly low reading skills.

Other dimensions measured as part of a functional literacy, a sense of belongingness to community/country and critical thinking, were at par with or somewhat higher than average OSYA. Questions related to development of “sense of community” showed slightly higher scores in BARMM than the national average of OSYA (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Correct Responses (%) by BARMM ALS Learners in Comparison with Total OSYA, Ages 16-30



Sources: ALS-BARMM Snapshot, 2018, WB; FLEMMS, 2013, PSA.

Note: Only includes those ages 16-30. Same conditions are used to define OSYA.

Socioemotional Skills

The socioemotional skills (SES) of ALS learners which were assessed in this study were the “Big Five” Personality Traits, which includes conscientiousness, openness to experience, agreeableness, extraversion, and emotional stability, as well as two additional behavior traits, grit and decision making. These seven traits are expected to influence an individual’s ability to achieve goals (conscientiousness, openness to experience, and grit), work with others (agreeableness and extraversion), and manage emotions (emotional stability and decision making). These attributes are expected to lead to better labor market outcomes (See Box 2).

The results show that ALS learners in BARMM seem to have consistently lower SES levels compared to the country as a whole, except for emotional stability. Research around the world shows that emotional stability tends to be

Figure 7: Average Socioemotional Skills of ALS Learners in BARMM and Total OSYA, Ages 16-30

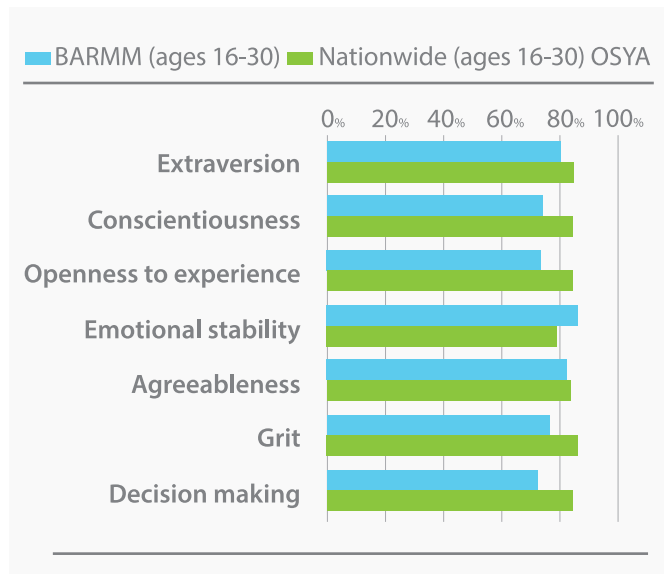
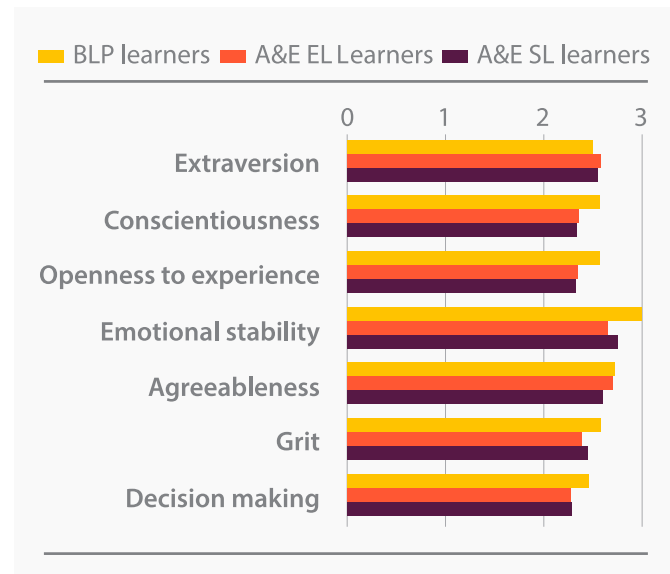


Figure 8: Average Socioemotional Skills by ALS Learners in BARMM by Programs, Ages 16-30



Sources: EALS-BARMM Snapshot, 2018, WB; STEP-Philippine Household Survey, 2016, WB.

Note: Includes only ages 16-30. Same conditions are used to define OSYA. Data is on a five-point scale.

Box 2: Understanding the “Big Five” Personality Traits

The “big five” personality trait model has been widely used in sociology, psychology, and related fields for over 20 years. During that time, researchers have steadily refined the methodology for measuring openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability. They have also drawn important conclusions about how these skills relate to one another and to the demands of different work environments.

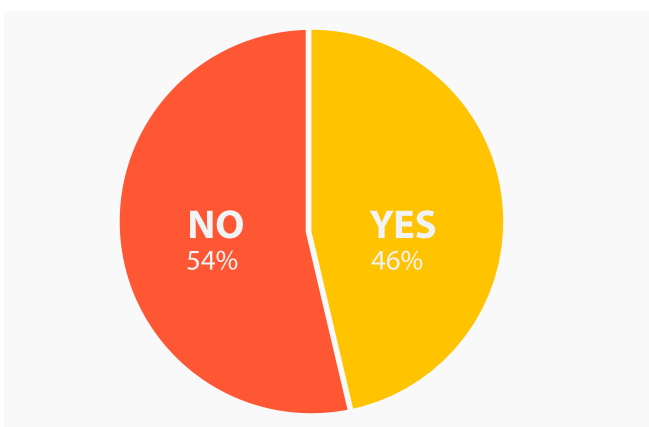
Although each trait has desirable aspects, not all big five traits are appropriate for each professional role. For example, individuals with high scores for conscientiousness tend to be self-disciplined, circumspect, and focused on long-term planning. These are generally positive qualities, but they may not be consistent with success in a position that requires spontaneity or swift reactions to changing circumstances. Similarly, individuals with high scores for agreeableness tend to be considerate and generous, but for that reason they may be reluctant to make hard decisions that involve trade-offs between competing interests. Other traits, such as extraversion, are not inherently positive or negative but merely reflect a specific way of interacting with the world. Some traits, such as emotional stability, are far more valuable in certain contexts than in others. Individuals with high scores for emotional stability may be indispensable in high-pressure situations, but their ability to maintain composure may be less relevant in low-pressure environments. The “big five” construct does not measure the abstract quality of an individual’s personality. Rather, it outlines the features of that personality—features that may be more or less valuable, or more or less relevant, depending on the situation (Acosta et al., 2016).

indispensable in high-pressure situations, which may be the case of high scores in emotional stability in BARMM. If compared with total OSYA aged 16-30, the level of SES for BARMM learners is still slightly low and significantly

lower than the total population of the same age (Figure 7). Interestingly, there is no significant difference in levels of SES among ALS learners in BARMM across different programs (Figure 8).



Figure 9: Share of Facilitators Providing Skills Training for Learners



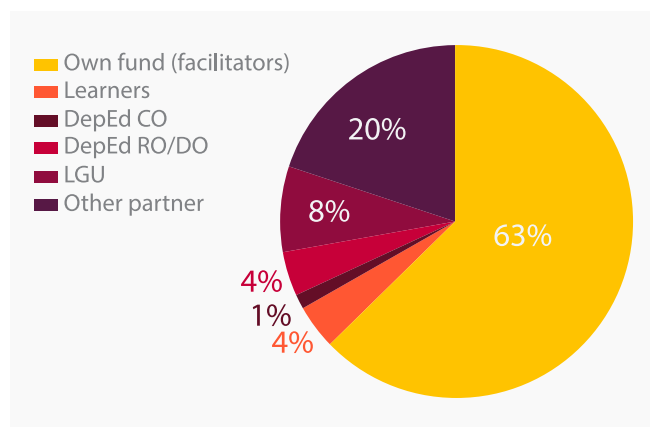
Source: ALS-BARMM Snapshot Survey 2018, World Bank.

Livelihood and Skills Training

International evidence on adult learning shows that adult literacy programs which include livelihood and skills training are more effective. ALS facilitators have been also encouraged to provide informal skills training to their learners. However, the informal skills training did not receive priority attention by facilitators or administrators. Generally, the training was not budgeted by DepEd unless there were donations from local government units or NGOs.

The data shows that less than half of ALS facilitators provided skills training activities with regular ALS learning interventions which led to some form of certification for learners (Figure 9). Most of these training activities are short-term and informal. Also, the data confirms that these additional skills training programs were funded by facilitators' own funds. Financial sources from the DepEd and local government support seems also thin; and funds from other government agencies such as the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) are not necessarily utilized in ALS in BARMM. NGO and other partners seem active, but their funds are not always available and flexible enough to respond to various demands on the ground (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Source of Funds to Finance Skills Training in ALS





Post-ALS Paths and Aspirations for Learners

While their aspiration is high, the data on the past learners of ALS in BARMM implicates some gaps between what is aspired and the reality. Only around 15 percent of the overall past ALS learners enrolled in college, vocational training or formal high schools, though close to half of those who passed the A&E tests pursued for higher educational/vocational credentials after ALS (Figure 11). Also, though small, the employment rates in formal sector jobs are higher for A&E passers; while self-employment (excluding farmers) is higher for those who are not A&E passers (Figure 12).

Many ALS learners in BARMM report having concrete plans after program completion, but these differ across ALS programs. About half of A&E secondary level learners have ambitious aspirations to pursue college education, and 30 percent indicated they wish to either return to formal high schools, enter technical vocational training programs, or re-enroll in ALS at a higher level. In contrast, close to 20 percent of BLP learners have no concrete plan after ALS, and 30 percent reported that they want to start some business after ALS. The Philippines passed a law to provide free higher education and TVET in all public institutions since 2018.

In addition, facilitators are actually more aware of the status of the A&E passers after ALS while they are less aware of the

Figure 11: Share of Past ALS Learners Pursuing Further Education/Training After ALS

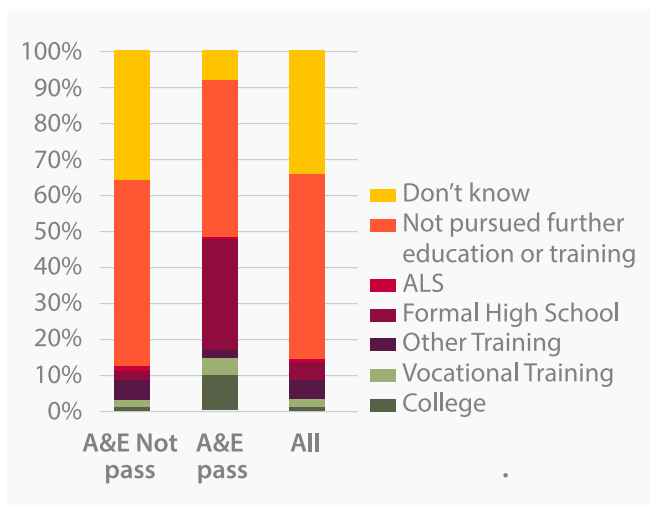
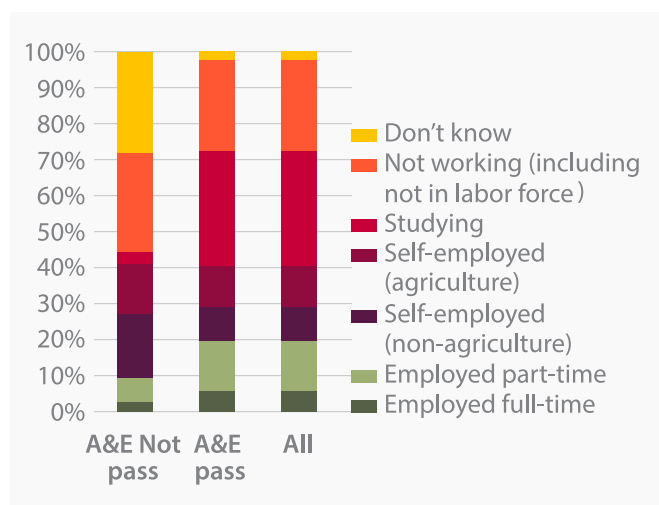


Figure 12: Share of Past ALS Learners' Employment Status After ALS



Source: ALS-BARMM Snapshot Survey 2018, World Bank.

post-ALS status of the learners who did not pass the A&E exam (including those who never took the exam). Figure 11 and Figure 12 may also imply that the passers have clearer personal directions after ALS and consulted well with their facilitators, compared to those who did not pass the exam. Though many of those who were A&E passers have gained concrete benefits from ALS, the reality is that the share of the passers among the overall ALS learners was still less than 10 percent of the overall enrollees in BARMM.

Only about half of the overall ALS learners in BARMM reported consulting with their ALS facilitators on their plans after graduating from ALS. Aside from ALS facilitators, about half of the learners said that they knew of employment services being offered by the national government such as the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), specifically the Public Employment Service Office (PESO), or the local government units but 20 percent said that they felt that such service would not be helpful for them.

Career guidance and information of associated government programs are limited for ALS learners though it could help learners to analyze own interest and aptitudes, make a career choice, and strategize their own practical paths for ALS learners. Outside of ALS, there are public assistance programs, including free public post-secondary TVET and tertiary education programs. However, more than half of ALS learners in BARMM are not aware of these public programs.

ALS Program Delivery and Bottlenecks

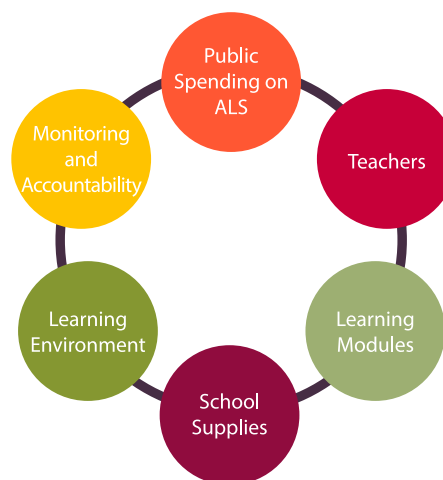
The previous studies assessing the ALS program delivery found that experiences of teachers, sufficiency of learning modules, quality of learning centers, school supplies, and frequency of on-site monitoring are strongly associated with the outcomes of the ALS programs.¹² This section reviews the ALS program delivery in BARMM by analyzing these key system components (Figure 13).

Public Spending on ALS

The national budget for implementation of ALS has been constrained though it has increased ten-fold over the last 15 years, but still at a slower pace than the public basic education spending (Figure 14). The public spending on ALS

marginally increased from 2014 to 2016, but its share of the total DepEd budget decreased to 0.14 percent in 2017. In 2018, the share further decreased to 0.01 percent. With the

Figure 13: ALS and its System Components for Effective Program Delivery



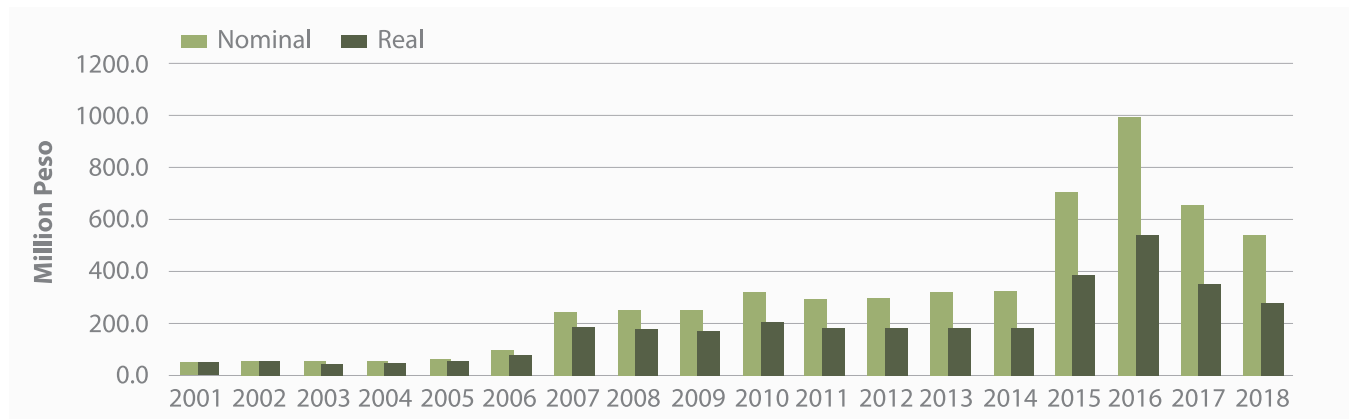
Source: Authors' analysis.

rapid rise in ALS enrollment and stagnant growth in public spending on ALS over recent years, the per-pupil spending on ALS has been lower than the level of a decade ago (Figure 15).

Per-pupil spending on the formal school has been increased by 80 percent over the last decade and reached around PHP 8,000 (USD 150) in 2017 in the real term while per-learner spending on ALS was averaged around PHP 500 during the last decade and has slightly declined in recent few years in the real term. Moreover, ALS has about 0.8 million learners in 2018, which represents three percent of the total students in the country's basic education system, but the allocated budget for ALS remained below one percent of the total public basic education spending for a number of years.

The critical resource constraint in ALS programs in BARMM is owing to low levels of allocated budget to the overall ALS programs, which is reflected in the poor quality of inputs for the program (fewer facilitators, less materials; as set out below) and poor outcomes (pass rates, completion rates and labor market outcomes). Upgrading and scaling up of ALS is part of the 10-Point Agenda of the DepEd Administration under Secretary Briones, but inclusion on the policy priority list has not been translated into massive increases in financial investment. Program expansion without substantial

Figure 14: National Spending on ALS in Millions PHP (Nominal and Real)



Sources: Department of Budget and Management, multiple years; Consumer Price Index (CPI), WDI, WB.
 Note: the real term is adjusted for the effects of inflation to a constant price level using the Philippine CPI.

resources in place keeps the implementation quality at significant risk.

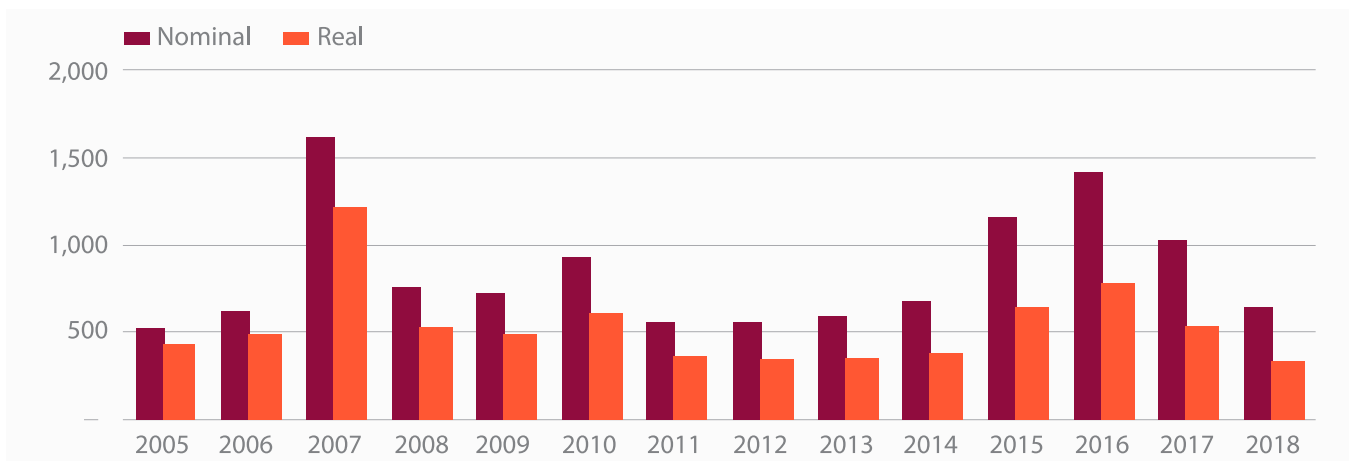
Teachers in ALS

As of 2018, BARMM had 283 ALS facilitators, which is the lowest of all regions. In BARMM, there are also donor-funded ALS programs including the ones supported by the Mindanao Trust Fund targeting Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Camps (See Box 3), but the majority of ALS programs are managed and delivered by DepEd’s employees. BARMM ALS implementers are comprised of 60 percent District ALS Coordinators (DASC), 40 percent Mobile Teachers (MT), and

no other positions; thus, clearly BARMM has very limited manpower in delivering the program.

The ratio of ALS teachers (facilitators) to potential ALS learners (OSYA) is the lowest of all regions, suggesting a critical challenge in improving the ALS program in BARMM. As the ALS enroller-facilitator ratio does not show wide distribution across regions, the ratio of 1 facilitator to OSYA ranged from 1: 260 in CAR to 1: 1800 in BARMM (Figure 16). As per the implementation guideline, each facilitator is required to take up a minimum of 75 learners per year in order to avail operational allowances, and 75 is already a big number for a facilitator to instruct and manage. The

Figure 15: National Per-Pupil Spending on ALS (Nominal and Real)



Sources: Department of Budget and Management, multiple years; Consumer Price Index (CPI), WDI, WB.
 Note: the real term is adjusted for the effects of inflation to a constant price level using the Philippine CPI.

Box 3: ALS in Moro Islamic Liberation Front Camps

Besides the ALS programs delivered by DepEd, there are also ALS programs independently delivered by NGOs, donors, and other partners.

In BARMM, one example can be the ALS program delivered under the Mindanao Trust Fund (MTF) for Reconstruction and Development started in 2003, managed by the World Bank with financial contributions from five countries and the European Union. It has three main objectives: (1) help conflict-affected communities recover economically, (2) help conflict-affected communities recover socially, and (3) strengthen local-level peace-building initiatives.

These activities targeted Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Camps. MILF's concept of a "camp" is more of a community than a military installation. Activities in the Six Acknowledged Camps included the continuation of community infrastructure and livelihood as well as the provision of the government's Alternative Learning System. Under the MTF-ALS project, about 1,832 former combatants, housewives, and out-of-school youth reported increased confidence because of improved reading, writing, and numeracy abilities. This has provided a model for continued education even under very difficult circumstances. After the Bangsamoro Organic Law was signed in 2018, the immediate concern of education officials was the anticipated influx of rebel returnees and other individuals who will be more confident in joining the rest of society. A strengthened ALS program will be critical in mainstreaming these individuals, as will the improvement of the overall operations of the BARMM Education Ministry.



available data such as national household survey shows us smaller areas where OSYA are more concentrated, but limited efforts have been made to consider a targeting mechanism to allocate limited teaching positions to areas where OSYAs are concentrated.

Also, about 10 percent of ALS facilitators in BARMM are over 60 years old and retiring within five years. This share of elderly facilitators for BARMM is significantly high compared to only three percent in the country. They have longer professional experiences in ALS and developed specific skills, so BARMM will face a significant need to provide induction training for new implementers and continuously support their professional development in the field.

There is a higher share of ALS teachers with advanced degrees but also higher share of teachers with less than bachelor's degrees in BARMM compared to the national average. Also, it is important to note that over 70 percent of ALS facilitators do not have subject-based specializations. In particular, English, math, and sciences specializations are scarce among ALS facilitators. This situation may cast potential challenges in delivering the A&E Secondary Level program as it requires more specialization among facilitators under the new K-12 ALS curriculum.¹³

ALS facilitators have limited in-service training opportunities to enhance their skills and often pay to attend capacity-

building programs from their own pocket (Figure 17 and Figure 18). The most popular trainings were programs related to ALS. Opportunities for ALS facilitators to continuously develop their professional capacity may be quite limited and imbalanced in BARMM. Facilitators in certain DepEd school divisions in BARMM have more capacity-building opportunities than other divisions in BARMM.

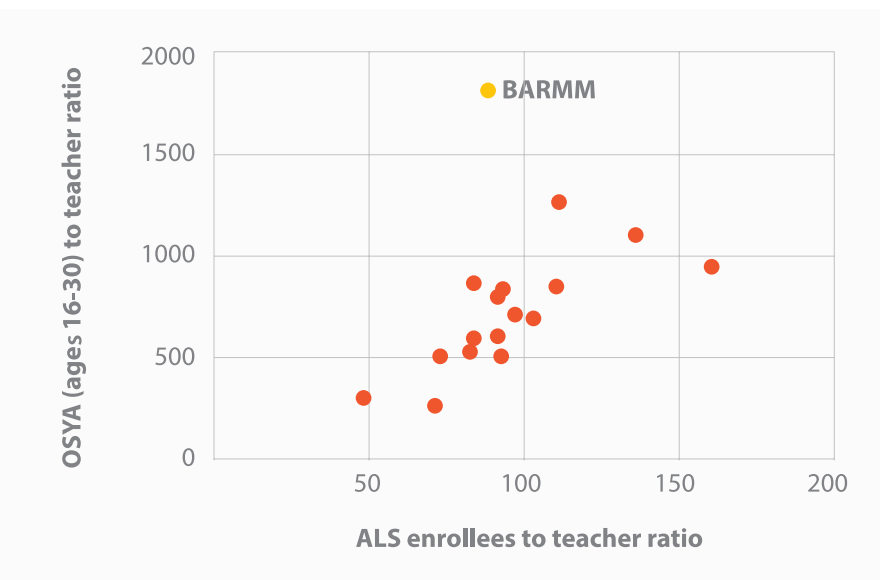
Generally, ALS facilitators are working remotely and independently, so this training provides them with important opportunities to not just learn about technical contents, but also to review their own practices and learn from others to overcome some of the challenges they face in the field.

Learning Modules

ALS Learning Modules consisting of short printed materials are critical as ALS is principally a self-paced learning program. ALS Learning Modules are like textbooks in the formal system. The physical availability of these learning modules has been persistently a serious challenge on the ground across the country, which is also the case in BARMM.

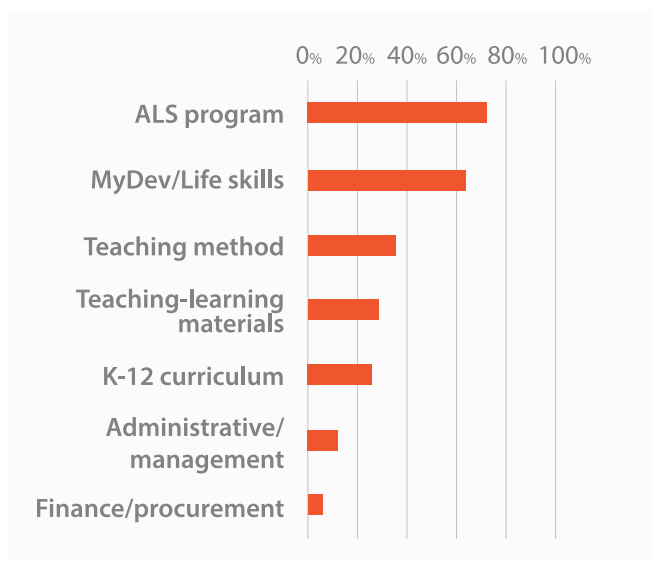
The survey data show that at best only 10 percent of ALS facilitators in BARMM think that they have enough learning modules which is significantly low compared to other regions for all ALS programs. As shown in Figure 19, among

Figure 16: Number of ALS Facilitators as Shares to OSYA and ALS Enrollers by Region, 2018



Sources: Number of ALS facilitators and ALS enrollers, DepEd, 2018; OSYA estimate, LFS, 2018, WB staff calculation

Figure 17: Training Course Attendance in 2017 and 2018

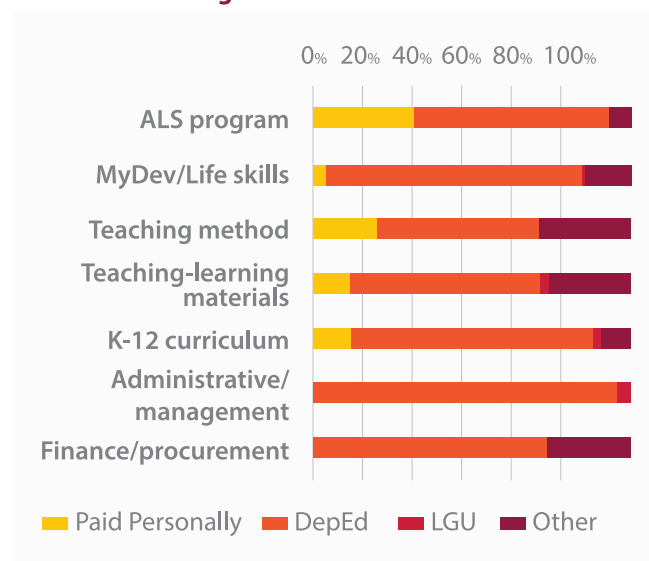


Source: ALS-BARMM Snapshot Survey 2018, World Bank.

ALS components, learning modules for BLP are in especially short supply. Also, only one in every three facilitators have soft copies of learning modules for reproduction or photocopying. ALS learners also reported this critical shortage of ALS learning modules as one of their top two concerns for ALS.

Consequently, only one-third of BLP learners and only half of A&E program learners were able to borrow ALS learning modules for self-learning at home between ALS sessions. The ability to study outside of ALS sessions is especially critical. The inadequate supply of learning modules significantly reduces the effectiveness of learning in the ALS programs.

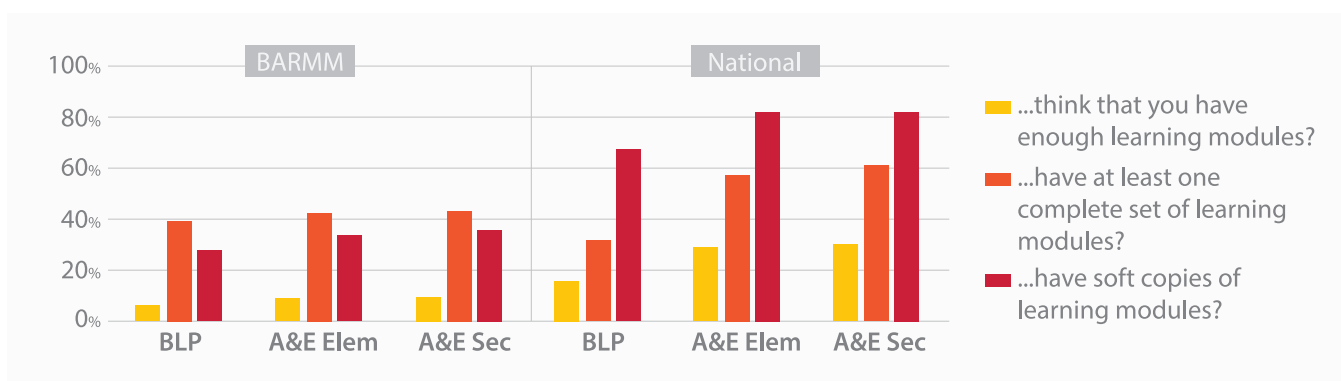
Figure 18: Sources of Funding for In-service Training Courses



Operational Expenses

While formal schools receive the budget to cover operational expenses in the form of School Maintenance, Operational, and Other Expenses (School MOOE), ALS facilitators receive allowances from DepEd to pay operational expenses and transportation costs to implement ALS programs. Besides these allowances and standard learning modules, DepEd does not provide dedicated learning facilities, equipment, or supplies, which need to be managed and arranged by facilitators. Many facilitators have cited lack of financial resources as a key constraint on ALS implementation; this section addresses this challenge.

Figure 19: Reported Availability of ALS Learning Modules by Subprogram, 2018 (% of facilitators)



Source: ALS-BARMM Snapshot Survey 2018, World Bank.

More ALS facilitators in BARMM are paying for a greater variety of expenses to deliver ALS programs using own personal funds compared to their peers in other regions. Over 90 percent of facilitators reported spending funds on basic school supplies, paper, and notebooks for learners. In addition, close to 90 percent of the facilitators reported using a share of their budget to provide meals for learners to encourage their continued attendance. Reflecting serious levels of insufficient learning modules, almost all facilitators reproduce learning modules for their learners. Moreover, a smaller share of facilitators reported covering expenses incurred for livelihood skills training, such as purchasing materials, compensating instructors, and conducting the government assessment for occupation-specific skills regulated by TESDA.

Among these categories, transportation costs were by far the largest daily expense as commuting to visit multiple CLCs to meet learners is expensive. While top expenses were transportation-related throughout the country, photocopying service fees for learning modules and meals for learners were significantly high in BARMM. The data indicate that facilitators typically spent approximately PHP1,800 per week to deliver ALS sessions, and about 30 percent of that amount went to cover their own

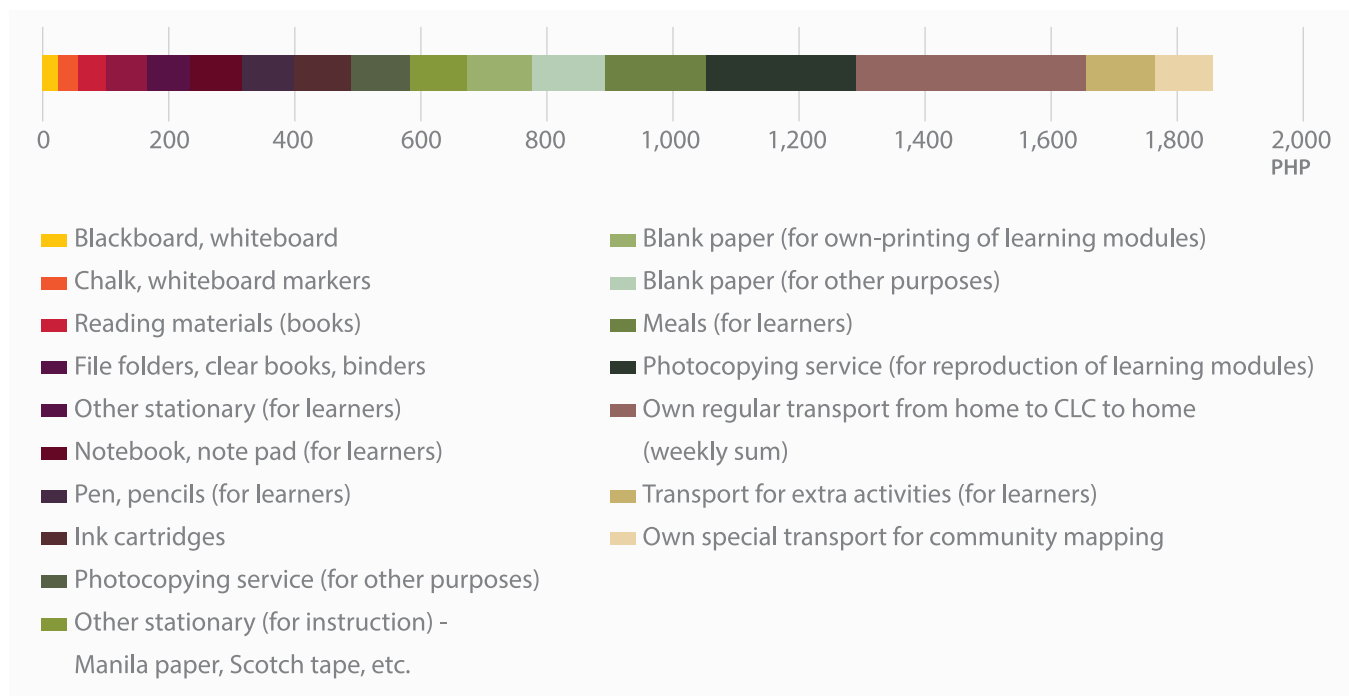
transportation costs (Figure 20). This estimate is based on the total amount facilitators spent on the items that are purchased by at least 70 percent of facilitators.

These expenditure estimates significantly exceed the amount of funds allocated to ALS facilitators by DepEd. As mentioned above, almost all facilitators in BARMM spent a large amount of their budget on reproduction of learning materials. If that part is removed, the gap is somewhere around PHP500 per week. On an annual basis, expenditures would exceed funding by as much as PHP20,000 (US\$400) per facilitator even if learning modules were fully provided. Most facilitator expenditures are leaving few resources to purchase supplemental learning materials. Beyond the DepEd learning modules and essential school supplies, the use of additional textbooks, exercise books, and computers could greatly enhance educational outcomes.

Learning Environments

Because the ALS generally does not use dedicated public facilities, ALS facilitators convene classes in a range of venues such as space in public schools and community centers, as well as private homes, churches, sports fields and other outdoor spaces, and other permanent or temporary

Figure 20: Total Weekly Spending by ALS Facilitators in BARMM, 2018 (PHP)



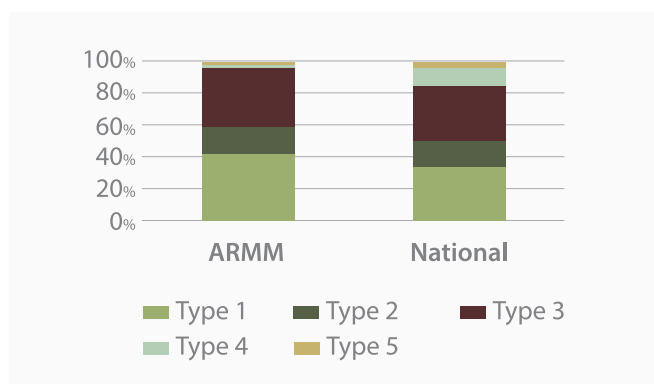
Source: ALS-BARMM Snapshot Survey 2018, World Bank.

locations. The DepEd classifies ALS learning environments into five types, ranging from the most basic (e.g. open-air space) to the most sophisticated with ICT equipment.

Conditions of ALS facilities are worse in BARMM compared to the country as a whole. In BARMM, the most common learning centers (about 60 percent) are basic structures (or no structure) and temporary locations (Type 1 and Type 2), while structures that are more permanent, more secure, dedicated to ALS, and has information and communication technology is 3.5 percent in BARMM against a national average of 15 percent (Figure 21). Type 1 and Type 2 are the most likely to be rendered unavailable by extreme weather or other adverse conditions. These also do not have any security features, making it difficult to store materials and other equipment.

In theory, ALS programs could be held in any facility type, but in practice, differences in the venue tend to affect both attendance and program quality. Analysis showed that attendance improves as spending on teaching supplies increases and the type of facility improves.¹⁴

Figure 21: Distribution of ALS Learning Facility by Type



Sources: ALS-BARMM Snapshot Survey 2018 (ARMM); World Bank; ALS Snapshot Survey, 2017 (National); World Bank.

Monitoring and Supervision in ALS

The diverse environments in which ALS facilitators operate—which include isolated indigenous communities, remote mountain regions, and conflict-affected areas—greatly complicate oversight in BARMM. ALS supervisors have difficulty monitoring programs in communities that are remote or difficult to access.



The data shows that monitoring seems to not be optimally coordinated with 14 percent of ALS facilitators in BARMM reporting they were never supervised during the last two years. The data shows that public schools (such as school heads) and district supervisors pay the most frequent visits to ALS programs as reported by facilitators in BARMM. Facilitators who are monitored by schools are more likely to be monitored and visited by other monitoring agents, leaving other facilities with limited chances to be monitored and given feedback for improvement.

While the majority of facilitators are moderately satisfied with feedback received during such visits, about 15 percent of facilitators reported that it was not so useful. On-site monitoring is costly and difficult for ALS, but in reality, monitoring is not practiced without systematic plans which define how to undertake monitoring and what aspects should be monitored on the ground. Facilitators seem to be missing important opportunities to be objectively observed and given important feedback for their development.

Special Challenges

Illegal and irregular issues in the formal school system have been reported in various reports including the Public Expenditure and Institutional Review of the Basic Education in ARMM by the WB¹⁵, but none has looked at the situation

in ALS in BARMM besides anecdotal evidence. The survey used the same questions from the World Bank's public expenditure tracking survey, a standard exercise to diagnose leakage of public funds and contextualized carefully in consultation with field implementers.¹⁶

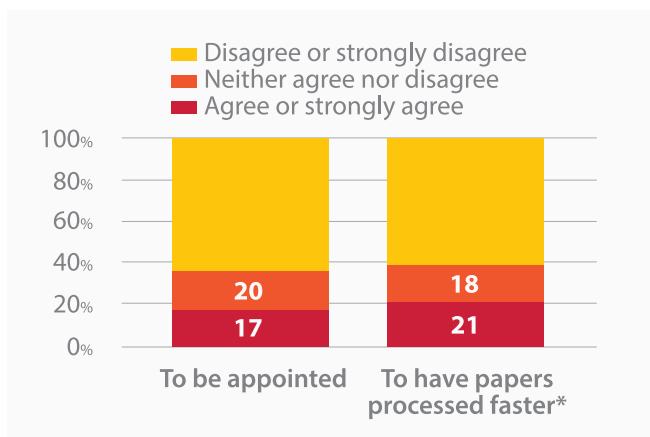
The results show that about one out of five ALS facilitators agree that making a gift or donation is common practice in order to have an official appointment. In addition, the same share of facilitators reported that giving 'improper' incentives is also prevalent in expediting the paperwork process that is necessary for them to gain their benefits such as retirement, promotion, and scholarships (Figure 22). About 10 percent reported that they usually have to give 'incentives' to receive their operational allowances, and close to 20 percent have been actually asked to donate some in order to receive their allowances for the reasons including contributions for renovating offices (Figure 23). Furthermore, at the time of the survey (November 2018), there was no facilitator who confirmed the receipt of the allowance for 2018. According to the DepEd Central, the fund was downloaded to the regional level long before that time, so serious bottlenecks lie in disbursing the necessary funds to individual facilitators.

Although the study was not a formal investigation, the issue of "ghost" teachers was also discovered in a few specific areas in BARMM during the survey. The survey team used the master list of ALS teachers and randomly selected responds for this study. In some areas, the team encountered situations where some ALS teachers could not be traced or



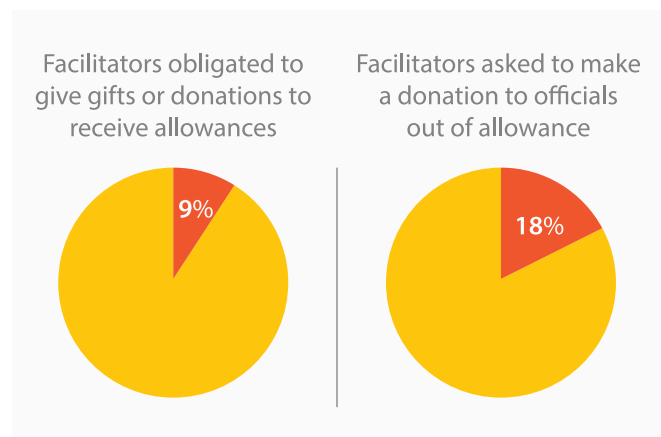
located though were listed in the official record. They are apparently inactive in reality or unknown to other fellow teachers working in the same areas. Similarly, there were teachers who were absent on the survey date and could not be found even after several attempts. In addition, there are several instances that their learners were not actual learners, or ghost learners. They are registered in the system but never or not actively attending learning sessions. Existence of these ghost learners would allow teachers to receive their operational allowances even if they have not served the required number of learners.

Figure 22: Irregular Practice as Reported by Facilitators



Source: ALS-BARMM Snapshot Survey 2018, World Bank.

Figure 23: Irregular Practice as Reported by Facilitators II



Policy Recommendations and Conclusion

The new BARMM government will face a number of major challenges in the education sector. The large number of out-of-school youth, both of school and over-school age, is testament to a legacy of poor quality and inadequate access to basic education. These deficiencies in the formal system require urgent action. Many children and youth in BARMM will continue to need alternative learning modalities as a complementary pathway for continuing their schooling and completing their missed learning. Thus, harmonized efforts for the formal school education, ALS, and ADM are expected to alleviate both the flow of school dropouts and the stock of OSYA.

Recommendations

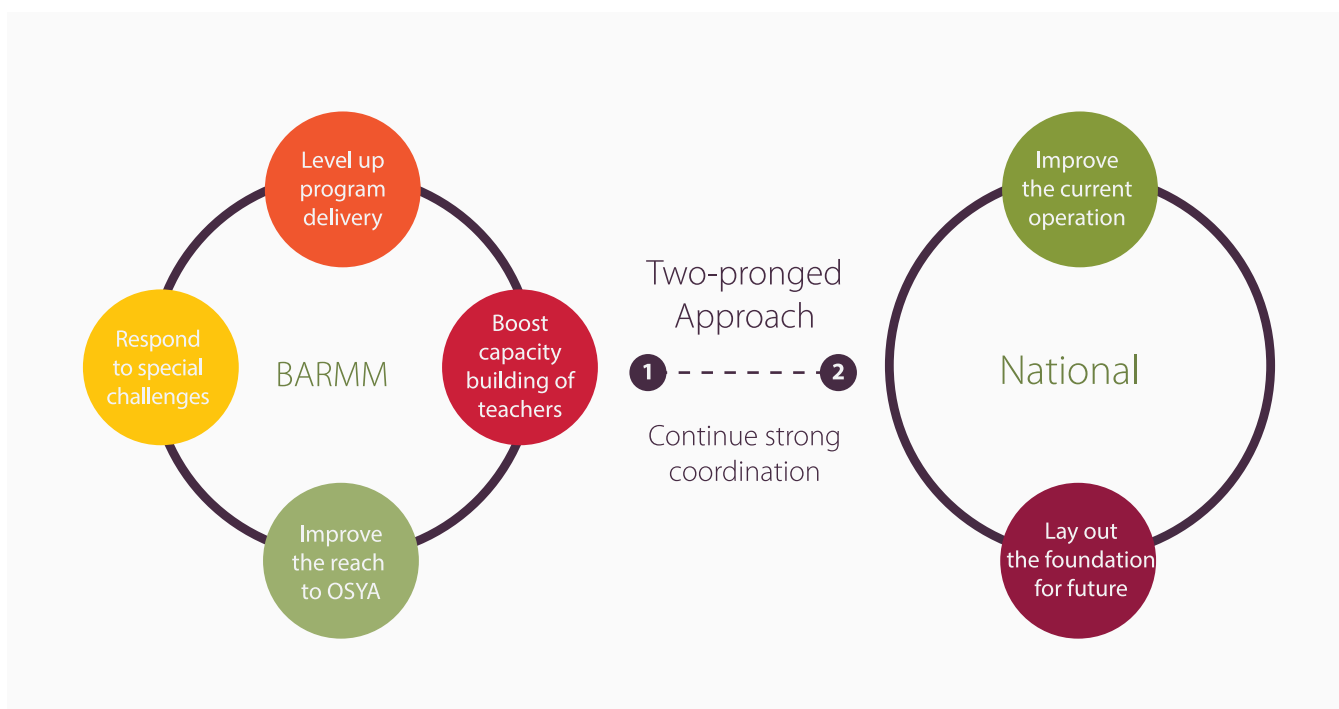
Significant changes need to be made to improve the quality and effectiveness of the ALS system as it operates in BARMM. Making these changes should be given the highest priority, after which efforts to expand the program can be undertaken. Given the huge potential demand for ALS, tackling the quality issues is urgent.

In moving forward continued strong collaboration between DepEd and the BARMM Ministry of Education on ALS will remain critical. While DepEd sets the strategic directions and policy, as well as refining system components in pursuit of the ALS Version 2.0., BARMM could contextualize priority actions as appropriate to respond to the unique concerns and addressing the perception of widespread irregularities in the region. A set of policy recommendations for both BARMM and national level is presented in a simple diagram below and Table 6.

For BARMM:

Level Up the Overall ALS Program Delivery

- In the short- and medium-term, the BARMM Strategic Roadmap for Alternative Learning Modalities (or ALM, of which ALS is core component), which provides priority actions and activities with specific timelines, could be the important guide to improve the ALS program delivery in BARMM. Among significant supply-side bottlenecks, providing ALS facilitators with more ALS Learning Modules and ensuring operational allowances received by ALS facilitators on-time could be the immediate actions. Also, maximizing the use of existing public schools for ALS learning sessions could be promoted.



- Synergizing efforts with non-DepEd ALS implementers in conducting joint planning, targeting, and prioritization of resources and M&E; as well as sharing of resources, expertise, data and reporting could be critical in the medium term.

- In the medium-term, the BARMM Ministry of Education could explore innovative ways to ensure more resources disbursed more directly and timely to the ALS implementers, which could help alleviate persistent deficiencies of learning modules, supplies, and operational costs on the ground.

Boost Capacity Building Programs of ALS Teachers

- Existing and incoming ALS teachers should receive more and better training programs to improve their teaching and learning approach in ALS and to enhance subject technical knowledge specific to the new K-12 Basic Education ALS curriculum. The Mass Training of Teachers conducted in 2019 to prepare for the national roll-out of the ALS Version 2.0 across the country including BARMM provided a good baseline for capacity-building programs and delivery. This will need to be accompanied with more division-level follow-up trainings for all its ALS facilitators in BARMM.

- In the medium term, localized peer-learning programs (e.g. Learning Action Cell, or LAC) could be carefully designed and introduced in BARMM. As facilitators operate remotely and independently, a well-thought plan to promote continuous professional development program is important in the medium and long-term.

Improve Approaches to reach out to OSYA

- As the immediate action, a targeted approach could be introduced to more effectively reach the accumulated OSYA with local partners. Utilizing the available microdata by PSA, local government units, and other government agencies, the community mapping activity by ALS facilitators should emphasize its advocacy impact instead of generating the database.

- In the medium-term, interventions to improve the image of the entire education sector including ALS could be carried out, with a special focus to support girls and female learners to strengthen their participation and survival in formal school education and ALS programs. Advocacy campaigns sending a clear message that ALS is indeed a reliable complement to formal school education towards quality

education could be sustained for the longer term.

- A financing scheme to increase the number of implementers in the field could be further explored to alleviate shortage of ALS teachers and implementers on the ground. For example, a service contracting scheme¹⁷, or voucher scheme used in the ALS-EST¹⁸ program could be potential options for this.

Respond to special challenges

- Eradicating irregular practices could be one of the most urgent actions for the BARMM Education Ministry. An inventory of all approved ALS teaching items against the status of deployment needs to be done. Also, random on-site spot-checks of learning sessions should be continued. For this, increasing participation of civil society groups and communities, possibly with the help of technology, could be effective to ensure accountability of the program.

- Annual program audits for verification and unannounced on-site supervision in the areas where persistent and prevalent irregular issues are seen would be important.

For National

Improve the current operation

- National public spending for ALS programs could be of the highest priority to address the current deficiencies, address the quality challenges, and support the system-wide changes that will flow from the new ALS 2.0. The allocation of public spending should be evidence-based and accompany a monitoring mechanism.

- Efforts by DepEd to provide a policy environment to harmonize the formal school education, ALS, and ADM within the overall context of Philippines' Basic Education will need to be sustained in the medium- and long-term.

Lay out the foundation for future

- Looking forward, it is critical for the national level to begin laying out the foundation for the future of ALS and become more responsive to the requirements of the global economy. Among many priorities, the following three areas are currently missing or weak in ALS, which could potentially boost the ALS program in the medium and long terms:

o **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** It is very difficult to recognize their prior learning/skills and package this assortment of skills into something that will be valuable to employers and society, and to find efficient ways to certify these skills. Improvement of RPL will help keep the learners motivated for adult learning programs.

o **Modular learning and micro-certification:** Not many adults have the time and motivation to take part in lengthy courses to up-skill and re-skill themselves. There needs to be ways for learners to work towards meaningful qualifications over time. These modular courses work best when a system of micro-certification, with a mechanism for documenting & tracking such certifications, is functioning effectively.

o **Career consultation or guidance support for ALS learners:** The development of an ALS-specific guidance service should happen simultaneously with this major initiative in the formal education. This post-ALS program needs to be anchored on coordination/alliance building with other government line agencies, local government units and private sector partners.¹⁹

Conclusion

This study provided a comprehensive review of the ALS operation in BARMM based on new data collected in the field. ALS has been the only government program widely implemented in BARMM to help low-skilled and low-educated youths and adults (including ex-combatants) who missed formal school education for various reasons. However, the majority of the findings suggest that the program has not yet reached its full potential in BARMM. The evidence from this study should be useful to improve the quality of ALS programs in the short, medium and long run.

The roll-out of a new ALS K-12 curriculum, which is aligned to the K-12 Basic Education Curriculum, or known as “ALS Version 2.0,”²⁰ has been an opportunity to revisit and upgrade the system components of ALS throughout the country.

The full transition to the new BARMM government, as well as the national roll-out of the “ALS Version 2.0,” should offer a unique opportunity for BARMM to work on these challenges in the short run and set key directions for the future, in order to unlock the full potential of people in BARMM.



Table 6: Summary of Recommendations

	Short-term priority actions	Medium- to long-term actions
BARMM	Level up the overall ALS program delivery	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the BARMM Alternative Learning Modalities (ALM)²¹ Strategic Roadmap • Liaise with DepEd to improve the availability of ALS Learning Modules and the condition of existing ALS learning centers • Improve the coordination with non-DepEd ALS implementers, especially in M&E 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore ways to ensure more resources disbursed more directly and timely to the field implementers
	Boost capacity building programs for ALS teachers	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve delivery and quality of the existing training programs covering more ALS implementers in collaboration with DepEd 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote localized peer-learning programs (e.g. LAC in ALS) and improve continuous career development programs for ALS implementers
	Improve approaches to reach out to OSYA	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a targeted approach in conducting community mapping and advocacy exercises, in collaboration with local partners (e.g. schools, CSO, LGU, and other GAs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore interventions to improve the image of the entire education sector, especially those to support girls and female learners attending formal schools and ALS • Explore viable schemes to expand the delivery of ALS programs (e.g. voucher or service contracting schemes)
National	Improve the delivery of quality ALS programs	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand public spending for the ALS program, focusing in the first instance on increasing the supply of learning modules • Execute and monitor the implementation of the ALS 2.0 Five-Year Strategic Roadmap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a policy environment which will harmonize the formal school education with ALS and ADM by defining target beneficiaries and eligibility conditions
	Lay out foundations to strengthen ALS for future	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a program for ALS implementers on providing post-ALS career guidance for ALS learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop micro-certification mechanisms for adult learners and modular-based learning systems while intensifying the use of digital technology • Strengthen quality of implementing the Recognition of Prior Learning in line with the K-12 BEC-aligned ALS curriculum



Endnotes

- 1 This study and survey were led by Takiko Igarashi, Nicholas Tenazas, and Pablo Acosta.

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- 2 This report is an overview of the full study report. Further details about the data, survey sample, sampling approach, and results are more comprehensively presented in the full report titled, "Unlocking the Potential of the Bangsamoro People through the Alternative Learning System (Full Report)".
- 3 UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning provides a database of various adult learning programs implemented around the world.
- 4 Singh, Madhu; Idris, Hegazi; and Chehab, Maysoun. 2018. "Pathways to empowerment: Recognizing the competences of Syrian refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey." UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.
- 5 Estimating impacts of adult literacy programs is difficult, and adult learning has multiple outcomes. See more discussions in the full report of this study. Also, a good discussion can be found in the WB Blog by David Evans (Senior Fellow, Center for Global Development), titled "What is the return on adult education? Evidence from India (2015)".
- 6 To give a realistic estimate of the size of OSYA, or potential ALS learners in BARMM, we consider using the upper age limit. This is because the previous WB studies on ALS (Yamauchi, Igarashi, Tenazas, and Tiongco. 2016. "Alternative and Inclusive Learning in the Philippines". and Igarashi. 2018. "A Second Chance to Develop the Human Capital of Out-of-School Youth and Adults: The Philippines Alternative Learning System") show that the ALS programs are appealing to youth and young adults, with

close to 90 percent of learners concentrated between age 16 to 30. Also, the opportunity costs for attending adult learning programs like ALS significantly increase with age while net-gains for attaining an additional educational level would diminish with age. It is unrealistic and inefficient to assume that all who did not complete basic education would be included in ALS. Additionally, our estimation excludes relatively new dropouts who have left schools before completing the full basic education cycle within the past two years. This is because they can be considered to still be in transition and could, with remedial support, return to schools more easily relative to those who left schools a long time ago. Over-aged students are typical across the country including BARMM as some of them delayed the start of schooling for various reasons and others repeated grades or temporarily suspended attendance.

- 7 In 2016, ADM programs had approximately 29,000 students comprised of 6,000 at the elementary level and 23,000 at the secondary level. (DepEd)
- 8 ALS is Alternative Learning Modalities, of which ALS is the core component. ALM also includes ADM and other programs that are specially targeted at including those who are marginalized.
- 9 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. 2018. "Preliminary Investigation on Unserved Barangays". Cotabato City, Philippines.
- 10 Completion in ALS is determined based on whether learners have completed their own individual learning agreement (ILA) during the intervention period, which is one year usually. ILA is established for each learner at the time of enrollment through recognizing their prior learning (RPL), skills and competencies. A clear example of non-completion is when learners stop attending sessions and thus miss being assessed at the end of the interventions.
- 11 Person who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective function of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community's development. (UNESCO)
- 12 Yamauchi, Igarashi, Tenazas, & Tiongco, 2016 and Igarashi, 2018. piloted in the USAID MYDev as Youth Development Alliance.
- 13 DepEd Order No. 19 S.2019 "Policy Guidelines on the Implementation of Enhanced ALS 2.0"
- 14 Igarashi, 2018.
- 15 World Bank. 2015. "Making Education Spending Count for the Children of Autonomous Muslim Region of Mindanao: Public Expenditure and Institutional Review for BARMM Basic Education"
- 16 Al-Samarrai. 2016. "Assessing Basic Education Service Delivery in the Philippines: Public Education Expenditure Tracking and Quantitative Service Delivery Study"
- 17 This should accompany: (1) sensible financial resources, (2) output-based payment with a performance-based mechanism, (3) geographically-targeted assignments, (4) operationalization of team teaching, including certified TVET trainers, (5) stronger monitoring and governance, and (6) regular programmatic audits.
- 18 Alternative Learning System and Education Skills Training program is a new program, piloted in selected areas across the country. Besides academic learning in ALS, a vocational skills training program is delivered by partners contracted with DepEd.
- 19 It cannot be limited within DepEd alone. One model has been piloted in the USAID MYDev as Youth Development Alliance..
- 20 D.O. NO13. S2019.
- 21 ALS is the core program of ALM, and ALM includes Alternative Delivery Mode (ADM), and other inclusive education programs.

