

# Philippines Remote Learning Study

## FINDINGS BRIEF #1: SUPPORTING HOME LEARNING PARTNERS

### About the study

The Remote Learning Study was conducted during the 2020–2021 school year to investigate how mother-tongue-based multilingual education reading instruction proceeded in 20 schools around the country while classrooms were closed. The school head, 2 teachers, and 4 home learning partners from each school in Grades 1 and 3 were interviewed to gain insights on school administration, teaching and learning, and the home environment. Data was collected at three time points—November, March and June—from 20 school heads, 37 teachers and 79 home learning partners.

### About the Sample

The majority of HLPs in this sample were working in the informal sector (52%), were aged 30 to 50 years (62%), and had only a high school education at most (49% completed high school; 29% less than high school). 36% were unemployed. Not all respondents were available at each time point. No HLP were interviewed in November as recruitment was still underway

### More information

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### Context

The Philippines is no stranger to school closures. Monsoon rains, typhoons, military takeovers, earthquakes, and other natural calamities regularly interrupt schooling. However, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic imposed a year-long pause in classroom-based learning in 2020–2021 for all grade levels. This imposes considerable responsibility on parents or other home learning partners (HLPs) to facilitate, monitor, and support children, especially the youngest learners who do not have the literacy or academic skills to be self-directed. The extent to which HLPs can be effective depends on their *availability* and *ability* to support their children in understanding and completing their schoolwork in the absence of regular teacher contact time.

Although schools in this study differed in socio-economic status, geographic location, school resources, and languages, HLPs shared many of the same challenges in supporting their child’s reading development. First, for HLPs, the sense of self-efficacy related to home learning support was often low. This is likely related to the level of HLPs’ education and literacy skills; HLPs who reported challenges understanding the modules and giving instructions to their children were largely those with only a high school education. Second, juggling domestic chores and/or work outside of the home and providing home learning support was a frequently mentioned challenge. Finally, parents had a difficult time keeping their children focused and on task. Some children, they said, resisted accepting instruction from their parents, would rather play, or lost interest because they did not understand the assignments or grew tired because of the amount of work they had to do.

All HLPs need to develop a clearer understanding about *how* to help their children work through the modules and need more guidance on how to enhance their child’s interest and to maintain their attention to school tasks. Although schools were limited by mobility restrictions during community quarantines, they found ways to support HLPs to help their children stay on track academically. This brief provides some of the practices described by participants.

### Bayanihan: A Collaborative Approach

The term “bayanihan,” also known as “damayan”, is a Filipino custom which refers to system of mutual help and concern among members of the community. It means working together toward a goal as part of the community. Due to the challenges posed by the pandemic to education, teachers, school heads, community members, and parents themselves exercised bayanihan and worked together to find solutions for each family’s unique needs.



Image courtesy of [Francis Albert Martinez](#)

*“Sometimes we sleep at the school so we can maximize our time to go the pupils' houses.”*  
(Teacher)

*“I do home visits to those students who live nearby. I feel sorry that I can't do face-to-face teaching to all of them.”* (Teacher)

*“During home visits we saw that there were parents who have difficulty teaching the children since they have not been at school.”*  
(Teacher).

*“Since we cannot face the children, we call for meetings of parents or go to their homes if there are things or topics that they do not understand. We teach them some techniques to better understand and teach the lessons.”* (Teacher)

### **Supporting HLPs through home visits**

Where allowable and possible—some students are in hard to reach or mountainous areas that are too far to get to—teachers made good use of home visitations, a practice done traditionally only for students at risk of dropping out. Home visits were opportunities for teacher and student interaction and for directly supporting HLPs. During home visits, teachers assessed the student individually, listened to them read, and provided reading instruction. They also coached HLPs. The teacher visits helped maintain important relationships, critical for learners' and HLPs' sense of connection to “school.” Parents found this time extremely valuable, both for their children's learning and motivation and for their own learning about how to work with their children and to keep their child engaged and interested. See also *Brief #4, Student Engagement* for more details of contact time and methods.

The number of teachers who met with students face-to-face increased slightly over the school year and reached a high of 41% of teachers in the study at the end of the year. Of those who did meet students face-to-face, over half of Grade 3 teachers maintained weekly face-to-face contact with their pupils over the course of the school year. Grade 1 teachers who met students once per week increased from 43% to 50%. By the end of the year, most teachers in Grades 1 and 3 met with students once per week or more (50% and 100% by grade, respectively).

Schools, principals, and teachers worked together to make home visits happen, but according to interviews, they prioritized households where students or HLPs were struggling. Teachers were aware of the differential needs of both learners and HLP through communications and outreach through phone, social media, and even two-way radio (see below). Although teachers and school heads were doing everything they could to make home visits, half of teachers still reported at the end of the year that they never met their students in person.

### **On-site instruction for HLPs**

HLPs sent messages anytime of the day and night to ask questions, and teachers were generally accommodating of these requests. However, teachers also took advantage of module distribution schedules as the time to support parents. For example, one school explained the process as follows. *Meetings were usually set for an hour in a staggered fashion, usually by grade, and with permission from the Division. Parents came to school once or twice a week to hand over finished work and claim new modules. Teachers gathered a small group of parents, a maximum of 10, to explain the directions for all activities in the modules. Teachers gave them a step-by-step guide to the modules. HLPs were oriented for the week's activities and encouraged to ask questions before leaving the school. Teachers wanted them to clearly understand the modules so they could focus on guiding their children at home. Other schools and parents reported similar support schedules linked to module distribution.*

Similarly, staggered schedules were developed by grade for students to come to the school for some socially distanced face-to-face instruction. In some schools this strategy involved all the students, and in other schools only the struggling students would be invited. Overall, schools all made a concerted effort to reach out to struggling learners and families.

### **Community support**

A common concern in provinces is the very long distance of the student's home from the school. Rivers, mountains, rough dirt roads, and long walks made going to school difficult even before the pandemic struck. As a result, the once-a-week module exchanges in school could not be done by some parents. If they had a question or misunderstanding about the lesson in the module, it was difficult to contact the teacher. In these cases, **parateachers** or more knowledgeable people in the community came to their aid. The Division of Northern Samar employed **Learning Support Aides (LSAs)** for selected schools. LSAs were college

“I give the supplemental readings to the parents face-to-face so that I can instruct them on how to guide their children at home.” (Teacher)

“I provide direct instructions to the children especially to the younger learners (Kindergarten–Grade 1) who need coaching in reading because they have to know letter names and sounds and how to say them correctly.” (Teacher)

“In other grade levels like in Grade 3, only those who are having difficulty reading are coached one-on-one. Those who are more independent readers, they don't get coached anymore.” (Teacher)

graduates who were not professional teachers but could assist and guide HLPs and students in their studies. They were based in the community, could speak the local dialect, and did house visits. These individuals were very helpful to parents who finished only elementary or secondary education, elderly grandmothers and grandfathers, and working parents who had several children.

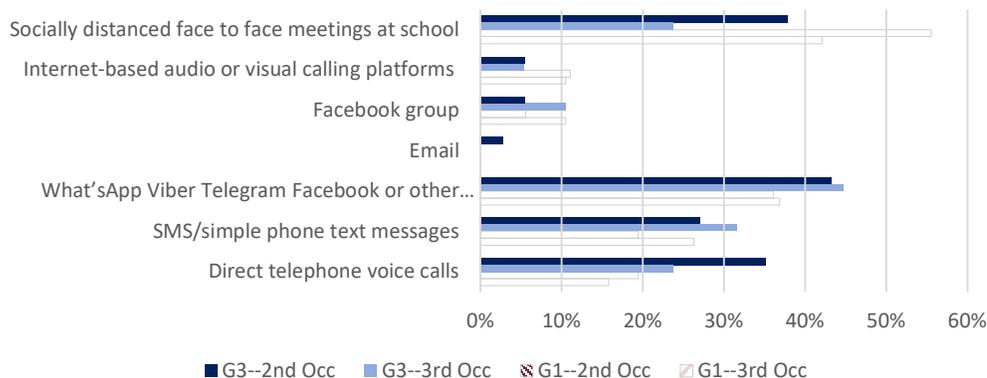
Where teachers have limited in-person interaction with parents, seeking help from other parents and community members is needed more than before. Teachers in this study needed support in contacting parents who did not answer calls, texts, and instant messages online. Here, neighbors and fellow parents helped in sending information and even receiving modules for them. **Parent leaders** were mentioned by four different families. These individuals connect parents to spread word about a meeting, for example. In Bulacan, “mother leaders” were assigned to help during module distribution and retrieval at schools. These mother leaders implemented health protocols and took attendance of HLPs.

Moreover, the **barangay staff** also contributed to connecting with parents. The *barangay tanod*, a type of voluntary community peacekeeping officer, sometimes helped in delivering modules and looking for HLPs who were non-responsive, since they know the area and residents well. In Bicol, they set up the barangay hall as the drop-off and pick-up point for modules in boxes labelled by grade level. One box was for parents to drop their child's completed work, and one was for claiming new modules. In a town in Western Visayas, where a home visit could cost 300 pesos (USD 6.00) one-way via horse ride, the local government unit arranged for the teachers' transportation to make sure that the self-learning modules and feeding ration of the children reached them safely and in a timely manner. Youth groups in Rizal Province led by the Sangguniang Kabataan (youth council), also supported younger learners especially in literacy and math learning by providing tutorial sessions for families where adults have low literacy and in areas where the LGUs and school officials deem such activities safe.

### Creative Problem Solving

**Technology** was used to provide support to HLPs. For example, teachers created group chats in Messenger and groups in Facebook, the two most accessible platforms for HLPs. These messaging apps provided a way to give instructions, and answer questions. In some cases, HLPs were encouraged to create video or audio recordings of their children's reading to help the teacher monitor progress and send by messenger. Teachers from five schools reported creating video presentations to help parents understand the instructions, and one school held online *kumustahan* (check-ins) for parents. Elsewhere, voice messages were sent to the parents' phones, or to the nearest neighbor or designated parent leaders.

Figure 1: Ways That Teachers Communicate with HLP (according to HLP)



*“I feel joyful knowing that I am directly helping my child to learn. Unlike before where I only prepared her food. Now, I not only get to teach her, but I also get to spend time with her.” (HLP)*

*“When all the children are studying, I also learn a lot from their lessons. That makes me feel happy and fulfilled as a parent.” (HLP)*

*“I wish they'd also give more story books and not just textbooks and modules.” (HLP)*

*“Distance learning is good if they can also allow a face-to-face at school with limited numbers of students in one class.” (HLP)*

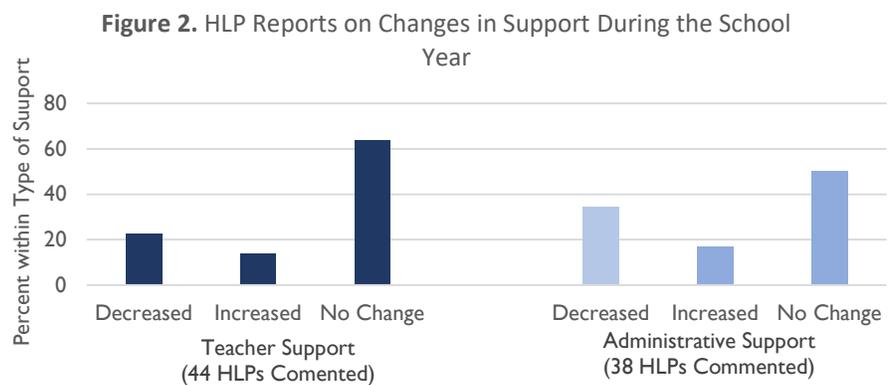
*“I recommend that the DepEd provides internet load, especially to those families who are in need.” (HLP)*

The ways in which HLPs described communicating with teachers is shown in Figure 1, above, by grade and by time point (2<sup>nd</sup> occasion=mid-year [March] and 3<sup>rd</sup> occasion=end-of-year [June]). The most frequent strategies were in-person meetings at school and WhatsApp or other mobile messaging services. See also *Brief #3, Use of Technology*. HLPs were given **Weekly Home Learning Plans** along with the modules to serve as the schedule and guide for parents and HLPs.

In general, **communication** emerged as a recurring theme among HLPs, who emphasized that communicating often, having an open line of communication, and communicating encouraging messages were strategies teachers used to support them. This was also done in a **spirit of acceptance, tolerance, and adaptation**. With a few exceptions HLPs did feel very comfortable reaching out to the school and teachers to discuss concerns, discussing with children the experience, and jointly finding solutions. HLPs have been challenged by this new responsibility and need support, but during interviews, HLPs and teachers reflected on the positive aspects of learning from home, especially the opportunities given to parents to regularly see their children’s learning. For many HLPs, this time has been fulfilling, joyful, and an opportunity to bond. It has helped HLPs learn new subjects as well. This level of comfort showed an upward trend between the middle and end of the school year. This positive shift in HLP comfort over the year is reflected in the observations of School Heads that HLPs are adapting to remote learning, while still recognizing that there are still challenges.

### How did support change over the course of the year?

During the end-of-year interviews, HLPs were asked if and in what ways teacher and administrative support had changed over the school year. For both cases, the majority of HLPs who answered indicated that they had not observed any changes in support. Those who noted decreased or reduced quality in support from both teachers and administrators mentioned reduced communications (e.g., updates on the remote learning program) and a reduction in the number or quality of materials provided. Comments on increased support from both teachers and administrators referred to increased updates, check-ins, and advice as well as increased materials or distribution efficiency. HLPs also noted increases in teacher monitoring and assessment of their children’s performance over the school year.



### HLP Suggestions for Support in Coming School Year

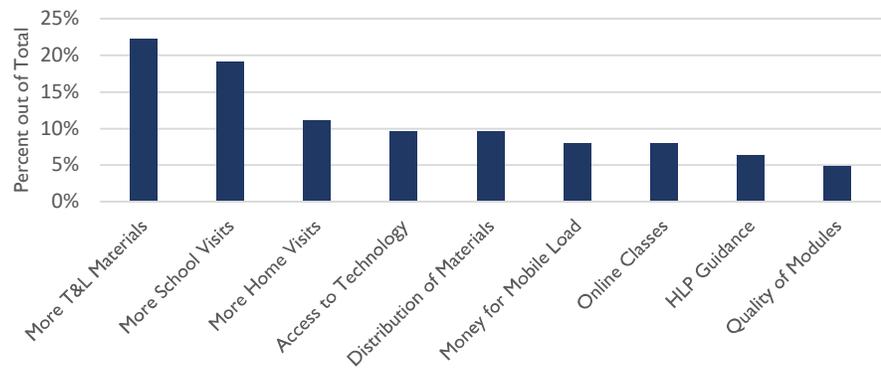
During the end of year interviews, HLPs were asked what recommendations they had for home learning support in the following school year. Of 76 HLPs interviewed, 45 provided a total of 63 recommendations. Most of the recommendations fell in one of two categories: recommendations for more learning materials - especially supplementary reading materials (22%) and for more direct instruction from teachers (30%), either through limited school visits with social distancing or home visits. Figure 3 presents the HLP recommendations.

*“At the start of the school year, learners and parents are not very enthusiastic about this, but as we went on, they are now more excited and participative.”*  
(School Head)

*“The parents relate to us and there is already development, before they are having difficulty, now there is development.”*  
(Teacher)

*“See some mothers who really monitor closely their child's reading. Some parents assist their children, and they understand when they ask. They are able to do the strategies I told them.”* (Teacher)

**Figure 3.** Suggestions for Additional Support During Future Remote Learning from 47 HLPs Interviewed End of Year



## Recommendations

- Given the importance of home visits, consider whether classroom assignments can be based on proximity to the teacher rather than only by grade level. Team teaching or parateaching—where someone other than the child’s assigned teacher makes the home visit—could be another solution. Considering the likelihood of missed learning in 2020-2021, student ability may not align closely to a traditional grade level.
- Prioritize and differentiate the frequency or duration of visits based on individual learner and family needs, with more frequent visits or longer visits for the learners who need support the most. Reevaluate needs regularly.
- Increase recruitment of parateachers or other aides who can provide orientation and support to HLPs on how to use the SLMs and how to access other resources. Instructions may also be provided by recorded video by an experienced teacher and made available when they come pick up modules, or if they have a mobile, internet connected device at home.
- Schools or parent leaders in communities should continue to set up times for meetings among parents so that they can work together to find solutions to some of their challenges in providing guidance for learning and managing their students and resistance to learning.
- Walk HLPs (many parents had older siblings help) through weekly activities, with a primary focus on ONE high impact activity, e.g., reading a sentence, word of the week, or blending words. Additionally, having engaging supplemental reading materials would support this priority.
- Make more use of WhatsApp, Viber or other mobile messaging services to keep HLPs connected, provide tips, or survey HLPs more regularly to gauge their successes and understand their failures, but some families may need financial support for mobile connectivity.
- Encourage more use of media, especially television and radio lessons when possible, which provide authentic audio stimuli needed for multilingual development (especially English language which is a reported area of weakness for teachers).
- Remembering to speak with acceptance and tolerance can reduce resistance and negative attitudes, consequently making other strategies for engagement more effective.

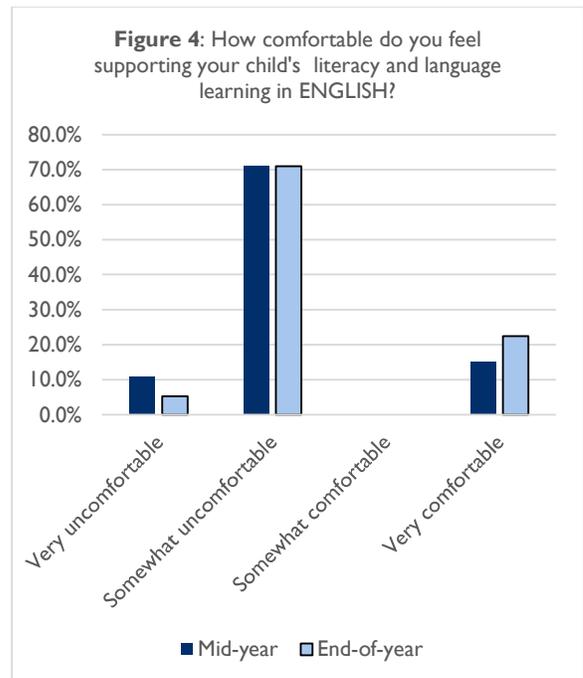
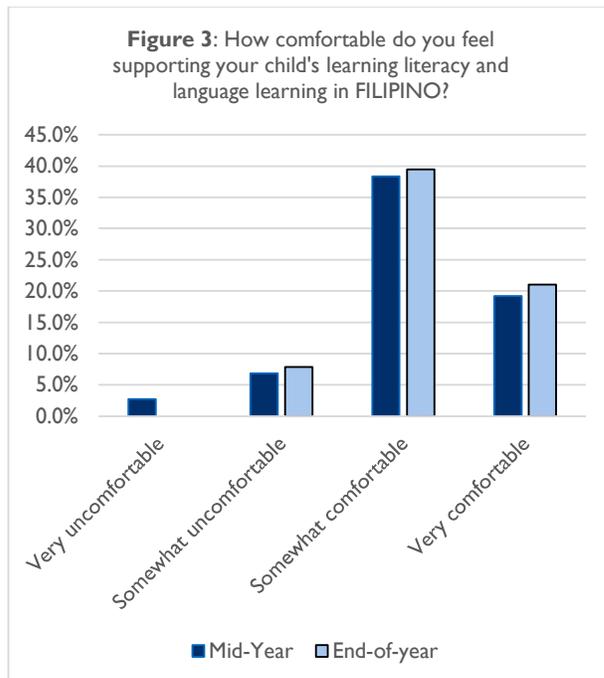
## Specific guidance and advice for literacy

When teachers provided support to parents, some of the advice they gave for teaching literacy follows:

- Teach children about letters, sounds of letters, and "katinig and patinig."
- Introduce abakada, to introduce the letters one by one.
- The learners should be writing; identify the letters and the names [of the drawing]
- I request the parents to guide their children in reading whatever materials they have at home along with the ones we give them—the modules, the Marungko books, story sheets, etc.
- Start with the easy tasks, like begin with syllabication instead of making the children read whole words immediately.
- The HLP reads, the child listens. Before the HLP reads, he/she sees to it that the child is focused on the HLP. Moderate speed of reading, reading with feelings to engage the child to listen.
- The HLP asks questions, we instruct the HLP to let the child speak. If the child is wrong, the HLP corrects him/her in a way that the child is not offended.
- The child should associate letter to sound before they progress to phrases.
- Understand that reading is not learned overnight, so practice from sounds of letters, to blending of sounds, association of sound to letters, until they can read words.
- Make the activities relatable to the children's experiences so that they can learn better.
- I told them to teach their children even just two letters a day.
- Give incentives every time they finish a module. Just to make learning more fun and exciting.
- Make it a point to read every day for at least 30 minutes with each child.
- The student must answer the modules themselves, even if their answers are wrong.

Comfort levels supporting mother tongues were relatively high at the first time point—49% were “very comfortable” and 45% were “somewhat comfortable.” By the second time point, this shifted to be majority “somewhat comfortable” (56%) and only 33% “very comfortable.”

On the other hand, feelings remained more consistent related to Filipino and English. Parents were relatively more comfortable supporting their children’s Filipino literacy development, but mostly uncomfortable with English, as shown in Figures 3 and 4, below.



See also *Brief #7: Literacy Instructional Practices*.