



## Education

### All Children Reading Philippines Activity (ACR-Philippines)

#### PROJECT SNAPSHOT

##### GOAL

To support the Department of Education (DepEd) in improving reading outcomes for early grade learners with focus on impact, scale, and sustainability.

##### OBJECTIVES

- Build capacity and leadership of DepEd to support high impact early grade reading (EGR) programs using best available evidence.
- Provide evidence through evaluation of reading interventions; disseminate the state of the art in EGR to key stakeholders; and provide key education partners the ability to collect, analyze, and use data for decision-making to advance EGR.
- Provide technical assistance for the successful implementation of strategic EGR initiatives.

Implementation: **2018–2022**

Total Investment: **\$5 million**

Scope: **Nationwide**

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#### PROJECT BACKGROUND

ACR-Philippines falls under All Children Reading-Asia, a broader program implemented by RTI International across multiple countries in the Asia Region. The activities directly contribute to USAID’s education goal to improve EGR skills for 100 million children worldwide.

There are two main areas of activity in support of the overall goals and objectives (see inset, at left): EGR instruction and assessment in support of mother-tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE), and the use of educational technologies to support improved instruction in early grade reading, especially during school closures. Key achievements and activities through July 2021 are summarized in this brief.

#### 2019 National Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)

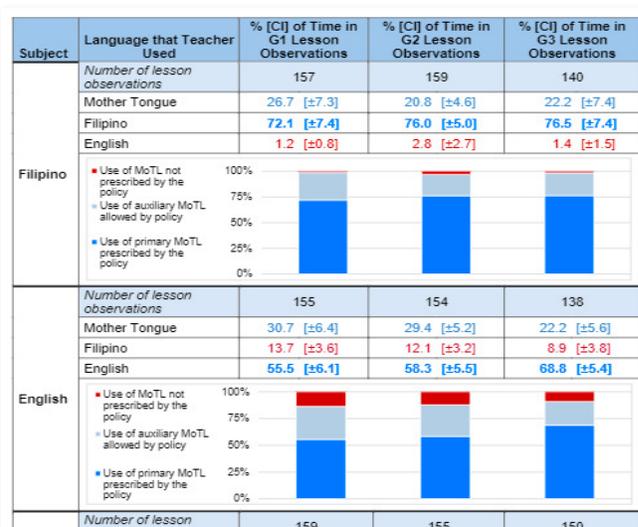
This study explored the extent to which MTB-MLE, as implemented at scale in the Philippines, may have an impact on students’ reading and writing skills in English and Filipino at the end of Grade 3. This 2019 study replicated a 2013 study that evaluated the reading skills of a nationally representative sample of students (2385 students) before MTB-MLE was implemented. Both studies used identical and locally adapted EGRA tools to measure foundational reading skills in English and Filipino. Although not a direct evaluation of MTB-MLE policy or implementation, the results showed that delayed introduction of English and Filipino, allowing for time to learn and learn to read in the familiar languages of home first, did not dramatically diminish the end of Grade 3 reading skill for children who could read. However, more children were not reading at all. A related “Language Complexity Study” looked at the results according to language groups and the characteristic of the mother-tongue language.

#### 2019 Regional EGRA Studies

The EGRA was also use in representative samples of schools that teach in the mother tongues (MTs) of Bahasa Sug, Chavacano, Mëranaw, and Magindanawn. EGRAs there measured Grade 2 and Grade 3 reading proficiency in each of the MTs. Other subtasks of the EGRAs measured underlying skills leading to fluency, such as listening comprehension, and were useful for understanding whether children were being taught foundational skills. The data helped to establish a baseline in these languages and also to estimate reading progress between grades.

## Regional Language Use Study (2019)

At the same time as the regional EGRAs, teams observed teaching practice and interviewed teachers in a total of 157 kindergarten classrooms, 160 Grade 1 classrooms, 158 Grade 2 classrooms, and 161 Grade 3 classrooms. Five subject lessons in the sampled classrooms were observed for 30 minutes each. The objective of this study was to provide insight into the relationships between the teachers' and students' language usage, the MTB-MLE policy implementation, and student reading outcomes, especially in areas with linguistically heterogeneous populations. It sought to examine how language usage in the classroom conforms to or diverges from the MTB-MLE policy. The results identified ways that reading instruction could be improved through better matching of teachers and students to the language of instruction and continuing to develop and use high quality teaching materials in class for reading and writing practice.



Data from the Regional Language Usage Study

## Capacity-Building and Educational Exchanges

The project also continuously provides **capacity-building and educational exchanges** for DepEd and other education stakeholders. These activities help build professional expertise in key areas related to project management, monitoring, evaluation, and use of data for decision-making. Such opportunities are not always available through regular budget allocations. Staff complete trainings in small groups to build cross-functional knowledge, increase opportunities to collaborate, and support one another to apply the concepts from the training in their daily work. The following table summarizes some of the training activities. These trainings were organized in distance learning format due to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) restrictions on travel and meetings.

### Examples of Sponsored Training Activities, 2020–2021

Training	Description and Provider
Project Monitoring and Evaluation	6 weeks online, IMA Worldwide
Improving Learning Outcomes at The School Level Post-Pandemic	5 days online, with half-day follow up after 5 months International Development Institute
Using Data and Information for Crisis-Sensitive Educational Planning	8 weeks online, UNESCO-International Institute for Educational Planning
Developing Gender Fair and Inclusive Educational Materials	Half-day online webinar, RTI International

## Remote Learning Study

When schools closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ACR–Philippines support shifted to remote research methods, and exploring how reading instruction is taking place during school closures, as well as what aspects of school leadership support well-being and continuity of learning. This is a longitudinal mixed-methods study involving three data collections among the same participants: the school head, two teachers (a Grade 1 and a Grade 3 teacher), and four families and students in 20 schools across the country. Phone interviews were conducted with the home learning partners. The child participants were also requested to fill out an informal literacy assessment based on an existing DepEd monitoring tool. The results are expected to help DepEd plan for capacity-building and resource support for school personnel and parents. Schools are expected to remain closed for the 2021–2022 school year given the ongoing pandemic. The study is utilizing UNICEF’s **“Continuity of Learning”** dimensions as a framework for data analysis. Data collection took place in November 2020, March 2021, and June 2021.

## Development of Digital Learning Content for Early Reading

The project is supporting development of eResources that promote early grade literacy and numeracy. Two types of products are supported by ACR–Philippines: (1) the development of interactive early literacy primers, or eBooks, and (2) educational television (TV) episodes for Grades 2 and 3. The **eBooks** were produced by teachers using the **Kotobee software**, which ACR purchased for teachers and distributed during a half-day orientation session. This orientation session trained approximately 200 teachers on best practices in the design of digital books for children.<sup>1</sup> As of August 2021, 220 eBooks in 11 languages—Akeanon, Bikol, Chavacano, Ibanag, Ivatan, Surigaonan, Tagalog, Kapampangan, and Waray, plus English and Filipino—have been uploaded to the [DepEd Commons](#), and downloaded nearly 5,000 times.



Simon, Grade 1 pupil of Dalandanan Elementary School watching DepEd TV every morning.

The project also partnered with a local production company, **ei2Tech**, to develop educational television episodes for **DepEd TV**.

ACR–Philippines sponsored 16 episodes of English and Filipino lessons for Grades 2 and 3.

To make sure that the episodes are aligned with the most essential learning competencies set by the DepEd as part of its Learning Continuity Plan,

script development is the responsibility of DepEd teacher broadcasters and ei2Tech, but ACR–Philippines reviews scripts prior to filming.

All the scripts for the sponsored episodes as well as dozens of others have been reviewed for content (i.e., grammar and other language structure, overall storyline, and illustrations and graphics) and against the gender and inclusiveness guidelines already adapted by ACR–Asia.<sup>2</sup> This is to ensure that all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, and religious or ethnic affiliation are equally represented in the texts and in illustrations using gender-fair and inclusive language. For both eResources and educational television, ACR is developing

outreach materials for social media and other formats to raise awareness of the resources, provide instructions for accessing them, and tips for parents on using digital resources with their children at home.

## Evaluation of the DepEd Commons and eResources Distribution for Offline Use

All of the eResources and some television episodes are made available on the government’s open education resources repository: The DepEd Commons. Because the importance of this central repository has increased during school closures, ACR–Philippines is undertaking an **evaluation of the DepEd Commons** and related resource repositories in the Philippines. The study aims to determine the reach and effectiveness of the DepEd Commons and to propose ways that it can be improved for reach and sustainability. Between May and August 2021, international and Philippine experts will conduct interviews, administer surveys, and review the platform’s data analytics to determine the effectiveness of the platform along four major dimensions: availability, access, usage, and learning. Additionally, ACR–Philippines will work with teachers and school divisions to carry out action research to understand how the eResources support teaching and learning. ACR–Philippines will deliver 25 laptops and 300 tablets to select schools in Regions 5 and 6 (in collaboration with the USAID/ABC+ project) and to schools associated with the authors of the Kotobee eResources. The tablets will be loaded with eResources in an easy-to-use navigation system allowing for offline use. The study aims to test the usability and effectiveness of the eResources and DepEd TV episodes when they are distributed in offline modality. It will test a model of teacher-directed continuous assessment supported by targeted resources for early reading improvement to be implemented in the 2021 to 2022 school year.



Kotobee ebook primer for reading in Grade 1

<sup>1</sup> RTI International eResources Review Toolkit, available here: <https://shared.rti.org/content/eresources-review-toolkit>

<sup>2</sup> RTI International, “A Guide for Strengthening Gender Equality and Inclusiveness in Teaching and Learning Materials,” 2017, <https://shared.rti.org/content/asia-adapted-guide-strengthening-gender-equality-and-inclusiveness-teaching-and-learning>

## Capacity Building of Education Officials

**Health and Education.** DepEd is continuously seeking evidence to come up with a framework and principles that will govern conduct of face-to-face classes until COVID-19 is fully contained. DepEd prepared a proposal in December 2020 for limited face to face transition emphasizing that it will be a shared responsibility between DepEd, schools, LGUs, parents and community in general. DepEd utilized the UNICEF heat maps to provide data visualization on COVID-19. However, there is a need for a more granular presentation of data for evidence-based policy decisions to transition back to limited face to face schooling in low-risk areas; hence, a need for a capacity building for education and data analysis. In partnership with DepEd's Planning Department, the Bureau of Learners Support Services, including DepEd DRMMS, ACR is working with the Philippine Society for Public Health Physicians to plan a Public Health Data Analytics Training to support post-COVID decision making regarding school reopening. In consultation with the partners, course design and development is on-going to include modules on Introduction to Public Health in Schools, Prevention of Common Diseases in Children, Public Health Surveillance, and Using Public Health Data.

**Education Futures.** The Education Futures program is anchored on the current and emerging directions of DepEd, including the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BELCP) during COVID-19 (near term), Sulong Edukalidad (medium term) and the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030 in the long term. ACR will also support DepEd in its goal to fully connect its learning continuity plan to the future. Enduring literacies and skills need to be highlighted in learning delivery modalities, technologies, strategies, resources, assessment, and in teacher/school leader capacity-building. In close collaboration with the Education Futures Unit of DepEd, we are supporting DepEd's education futures program (EFP) by implementing the following activities: (1) literature review of co-creating learning spaces for the future for improved Early Language Literacy and Numeracy in the Philippines; (2) capacity building; and (3) Innovation Laboratory Workshops and Prototype Development of learning spaces for the future.

## RESEARCH PRODUCTS AT A GLANCE (2019–2020):

### EdTech Ecosystem Landscape report and topic briefs (Open Educational Resources, EdTech Policy, Teacher Training, Last Mile Schools)

- [Philippines Education Technology Ecosystem Profile | SharEd \(rti.org\)](#)
- [Open Educational Resources in Philippine Schools \[Brief\] | SharEd \(rti.org\)](#)
- [Education Policy and Strategy for Scaling EdTech in Philippine Schools | SharEd \(rti.org\)](#)
- [Going the Last Mile: Equitable Access to Enabling Infrastructure in Philippine Schools \[Brief\] | SharEd \(rti.org\)](#)
- [Teacher Professional Development on ICT in Education in the Philippines \[Brief\] | SharEd \(rti.org\)](#)



## ICT in Schools Survey Data

School-based technology and the shift to remote learning during COVID-19: Exploring remote learning readiness of school districts in the Philippines | SharEd (rti.org)

## Early Grade Reading Assessment Research

2019 Regional Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA): Bahasa Sug, Chavacano, Magindanawn, and Mëranaw | SharEd (rti.org)

2019 Language Usage Study in Bahasa Sug, Chavacano, Magindanawn, and Mëranaw Mother Tongue Schools | SharEd (rti.org)

2019 National Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA): English and Filipino, Grade 3 Findings Report | SharEd (rti.org)

2020 - Reading achievement in the Philippines: The role of language complexity | SharEd (rti.org)

2020 Languages Descriptions Report: Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) - Documents Detail (usaid.gov)



All Children Reading–Asia  
All Children Reading–Philippines

School-based technology and the shift to remote learning during COVID-19: Exploring remote learning readiness of school districts in the Philippines  
*White Paper*

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