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G A B A Y (Guide)

Strengthening Inclusive Education for Blind, Deaf and Deafblind Children

Year 4 Annual Performance Report July 2022 to June 2023



This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It was prepared by Resources for the Blind, Inc.

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or the United States Government.

July 2023

YEAR 4 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

July 2022 to June 2023



JULY 2023

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AWP	Annual Work Plan
BHPI	Better Hearing Philippines, Inc.
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CHO	City Health Office
CHWs	Community Health Worker s
CSDs	Children with Sensorial Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSWDO	City Social Welfare and Development Office
DBSP	Deaf Blind Support Philippines, Inc.
DepEd	Department of Education
DPO	Disabled People’s Organization
DLDM	Distance Learning Delivery Modalities
EGRA-HI	Early Grades Reading Assessment for the Hearing Impaired
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSL	Filipino Sign Language
H/ATC	Hearing / Audiological Test Center
ILRC	Inclusive Learning Resource Center
IR	Intermediate Result
LGU	Local Government Unit
LSB	Local School Board
LV	Low Vision
MDVI	Multiple Disabilities and Visual Impairment
NGO	Non-Government Organizations
OAP	Optometric Association of the Philippines
Ophtha	Ophthalmologist
Opto	Optometrist
PQI	Program Quality Indicators
PAVIC	Parents Advocate for Visually Impaired Children
PDAO	Persons with Disability Affairs Office
PEEC	Primary Eye and Ear Care
PFGE	Partnership for Growth with Equity
RBI	Resources for the Blind, Inc.
SPED	Special Education
STS	School-to-School International
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gabay (Guide): Strengthening Inclusive Education for Blind, Deaf and Deafblind Children has the overall goal to increase access to quality education for Blind, Deaf and Deafblind learners to contribute to the attainment of the goals of USAID/Philippines' Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) and the Partnership for Growth with Equity (PFGE) framework and to promote broad-based and inclusive economic growth in the Philippines by improving education governance and improving reading skills at the primary level. Its coverage includes three sites: Batangas City and Province, Sorsogon City and Province in Luzon and Maasin City and Southern Leyte in the Visayas with three Intermediate Results:

IR 1 (Improved enrolment of Blind, Deaf and Deafblind children) is where children are identified and referred to schools. Year 4 has continued with the utilization of the developed PEEC Manual during the Gabay PEEC Training for Community Health Workers (CHWs) capacity building for the conduct of vision and hearing screening to children. This resulted to the continuous increase in the number of children screened and referred to appropriate health service providers. Those children not in schools are referred for education interventions to schools with teachers who have been trained on educating children with sensorial disabilities.

IR2 (Improved reading performance among Blind and Deaf Learners) includes building capacities of teachers and school heads through trainings and workshops using the developed modules and hands-on experiences on the utilization of equipment and assistive devices. Mentoring and coaching on Filipino Sign Language and provision of technical assistance, learning resource materials and reading interventions were likewise provided to teachers and parents. For this year, reading assessments were conducted to measure the performance among blind and deaf learners.

IR3 (Improved Local Government attention to the needs of children with sensorial disabilities) continued with its series of advocacy activities that led to an increased knowledge about the rights of Children with Disabilities and local services for Persons with Disabilities in the Community. Year 4 has also focused on the improvement of local programs and services of CSDs by tapping with local school board members as part of project sustainability.

II. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Table 1: Summary of Gabay Results in Year 4

	Gabay Indicators	Target	Accomplishments				Cumulative Targets as of June 30, 2023	Annual Performance Achieved
			Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16		
IR 1: Improved enrollment of blind, deaf and deaf-blind children	ES.1-56 Number of learners with improved access to education through USG-assisted programs (formerly Number of referred children enrolled at DepEd School)	28	-	30	3	-	33	117.86%
	Percent increase in enrollment of children with sensorial disabilities	0	-	+319.26 %	-	-	+319.26 %	+319.26 %
Outcome 1: Increased referrals of blind, deaf and deaf-blind children not in school to DepEd	Number of referred children for enrollment	51	-	30	25	-	55	107.84%
Output 1: Increased capacity of health service providers to screen children	Number of Community Health Workers with improved scores	105	158	-	-	-	158	150.48%
Output 2: Increased number of children screened for visual and hearing impairments	Number of children screened	0	214	91	-	-	305	305%

	Gabay Indicators	Target	Accomplishments				Cumulative Targets as of June 30, 2023	Annual Performance Achieved
			Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16		
IR 2: Improved reading performance among blind and deaf learners	Reading scores for EGRA - HI	Endline Data	-	-	-	-	-	-
	ES 1.8-1 Number of local basic education policies or deliberated with inputs from USAID supported analyses/databases (formerly Number of DepEd policies adopting Gabay modules and materials)	0	-	1	-	-	1	100%
Outcome 1: Increased access of deaf and blind learners to learning materials	Number of children with sensorial disabilities reached with USG assistance	165	396	103	-	-	499	302.42%
	ES.1-3 Number of learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG assistance	165	224	30	-	-	254	153.94%
Outcome 2: Improved capacity of teachers to teach blind & deaf learners	Number of teachers developed new and appropriate teaching strategies / methods for blind and deaf learners	115	14	108	25	1	148	128.70%

	Gabay Indicators	Target	Accomplishments				Cumulative Targets as of June 30, 2023	Annual Performance Achieved
			Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16		
Outcome 3: Improved capacity of DepEd to develop reading interventions for blind and deaf learners	Number of reading interventions developed for blind and deaf learners	26	87	103	31	9	230	884.62%
	Supp 7 Number of parents or community members trained to support children's education with USG assistance	150	41	90	35	-	166	110.67%
Output 1: Increased availability of assistive technology for blind and deaf learners	Number of learners using assistive learning devices	76	35	-	60	-	95	125.00%
Output 2: Increased capacity to develop learning materials for blind and deaf learners	ES.1-10 Number of primary or secondary textbooks and other teaching and learning materials (TLMs) that are inclusively representative provided with USG assistance	1393	3172	-	61	325	3558	255.42%
Output 3: Improved capacity of DepEd officials and teachers to conduct reading assessment to deaf learners	ES.1-6 Number of educators who complete professional development activities with USG assistance	0	84	21	73	-	178	178%

	Gabay Indicators	Target	Accomplishments				Cumulative Targets as of June 30, 2023	Annual Performance Achieved
			Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16		
	ES.1-12 Number of education administrators and officials who complete professional development activities with USG assistance	0	8	-	8	-	16	1600%
IR 3: Improved local government attention to the needs of children with sensorial disabilities	Number of inclusive-education policies (ordinances, executive orders, resolutions) implemented by LGUs	3	-	-	3	-	3	100%
	Number of LGUs with resource allocations for children with disabilities	3	-	1	1	-	2	66.67%
	Number of new resource centers	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Outcome 1: Improved capacity of parents/ disabled people's orgs. (DPOs)/ civil society orgs. (CSOs) to engage local governments	Number of LGU engagement plans developed by parents/ DPOs/ CSOs/peers	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
	ES.1-13 Number of parent teacher associations (PTAs) or community-based school governance structures	0	-	-	-	-	-	-

	Gabay Indicators	Target	Accomplishments				Cumulative Targets as of June 30, 2023	Annual Performance Achieved
			Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16		
	engaged in primary or secondary education supported with USG assistance							
Output 1: Increased knowledge of parents/DPOs/CSOs on sensorial disabilities and children's rights	Number of individuals participating in trainings with increased knowledge of sensorial disabilities and children's rights	0	111	-	51	-	162	162.00%
Output 2: Increased knowledge of parents/DPOs/CSOs on Local Government policies and services	Number of individuals participating in trainings with increased knowledge of LGU policies and services	150	111	-	147	28	286	190.67%

III. MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OUTPUTS

A. INTERMEDIATE RESULT 1

Improved enrolment of Blind, Deaf and Deafblind children

- Primary Eye and Ear Care (PEEC) Trainings conducted to 159 Community Health Workers in Batangas, Sorsogon and Southern Leyte who screened 202 CSDs and referred them to health and education facilities
- Retraining on Basic Audiometric Testing of 17 Para-Audiometrists from the H/ATCs of Batangas, Sorsogon City and Maasin City
- Presentation of Hearing/Audiological (H/ATC) Test Center Operational Guidelines for validation to 13 participants from the H/ATCs
- Inauguration of 2 Hearing/Audiological (H/ATC) Test Centers for the Province of Batangas and Maasin City
- Enrolment of Children with Sensorial Disabilities in SY 2022-2023 (432) increased by 9.65% from SY2021-2022 (394)

A.1 Online Primary Eye and Ear Care (PEEC) Training for Community Health Workers (CHWs)

Gabay conducted the sixth run of the Primary Eye and Ear Care (PEEC) Training for Community Health Workers (CHWs) last August 23-26, 2022 via Zoom. The activity was designed to establish eye and ear care services through active participation of the Community Health Workers and other service providers who are the primary front liners in giving services to identify vision and hearing problem among children with sensorial disabilities.

Gabay prioritized CHWs from the twelve (12) municipalities in Batangas that were not yet reached to maximize the delivery of interventions and increase the number of children screened and referred to education facilities from the more than a thousand barangays in the province. Likewise, there were two remaining unreached municipalities in Sorsogon and one in Southern Leyte who were tapped to participate in the activity.

Table 2: Number of CHWs completed the PEEC Training

Province	CHWs		Total
	Male	Female	
Batangas	7	112	119
Sorsogon	2	18	20
Southern Leyte		20	20
Total	9	150	159

A total of 159 CHWs participated in the activity. Nine (9) or 5.66% were males while one hundred fifty (150) or 94.34% were females. Of the total, 119 or 74.85% CHWs were from Batangas, 20 or 12.58% from Sorsogon and 20 or 12.58% from Southern Leyte.

Table ____: Profile of CHWs completed the PEEC Training

Province	BHWs		BNS		Midwives		Nurses		Community Leaders		Total		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	TOTAL
Batangas	3	82		11	1	9	2	5	1	5	7	112	119
Sorsogon					1	10	1	8			2	18	20
Southern Leyte		15		5								20	20
Total	3	97	0	16	2	19	3	13	1	5	9	150	159
	100		16		21		6		6		9	150	159

It can be gleaned from the table above that out of the 159 participants, 100 (62.9%) are Barangay Health Workers (BHWs), 16 (10%) are Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS), 21 (13.21%) are Midwives, 16 (10%) are Rural Health Nurses, 6 (3.78%) are Community Leaders consist of PDAO Focal Person, PWD Officers, Social Workers, and Administration Staff of the Mayor's Office.

Similar to the previous online trainings, Eye and Ear Specialists facilitated their sessions first then guided demonstrations followed. CHWs acted as patient and screener interchangeably for their demo practice.

During this training, emphasis was afforded to orientation of the vision and hearing screening used, strengthening connections of screening schools, and referral system. Gabay also discussed referral system and inclusive education topics threshed out from the good practices and shared experiences of other CHWs.

Participants were also provided with the information on the link for pretest access prior the lecture sessions, including registration and details on how to claim the PEEC Kit which consists of a manual, E-chart, pinhole, otoscope w/ penlight, and screening forms.

Day 1

Participants attended the first session at 1pm on Primary Eye Care facilitated by Dr. Candy Delos Reyes, an Eye Specialist and Low Vision Clinician. She shared the levels of eye care, basic parts of the eye, common eye diseases, and introduction to Mass Eye Screening. Dr. Delos Reyes discussed the terms in local languages and at the same time tried to make the sessions interactive. Participants posted their questions on the chatbox and some preferred to unmute themselves and spoke. Several questions included are about the eye transplant, how is this true, and if pterygium eye cases will go back after surgery. Dr. Delos Reyes advised the CHWs who are always on the go and in the field and being exposed to sunlight, wind, and dust to wear sunglasses or a hat to shield their eyes.

The participants also shared that they witnessed cases of eye accidents and asked about the emergency and non-emergency eye cases. The participants were posting questions in the chatbox with their experiences and observations about the eye cases like dry eyes, diabetes, and common problems like distance and near visions.



Day 2

All participants had their actual demonstrations using the forms and kit provided. They worked in pairs as patient and screener to have a trial grasp of the theories they have learned. The participants were divided into three (3) breakout rooms to maximize their experiences in demo practice and discussions combined. One of the facilitators in the breakout groups was also an Optometrist, Mr. Lester Parba. He reviewed the participants on conducting interviews using the Gabay eye screening forms and explaining content by content. He provided examples on cases and went into calling volunteers to perform live demo as patient and screener



Participants in the breakout rooms conducted their demonstration trial.



Day 3

The session was allotted to primary ear care and its corresponding topics were discussed by Ms. Myra Jessica Guiwo- Lesniana, a Clinical Audiologist from Better Hearing Philippines which is the partner of Gabay in ear care. Ms. Lesniana explained the levels of ear care, basic parts of the ear, and the common diseases or disorders of the ear.

Ms. Lesniana discussed the different causes of the diseases including the different parts affected. Participants were very active and several comments on the chatbox popped in about the ear concerns and observations. Some of the questions were about the ear pain like a beat, usage of cotton buds, connection between toothache and ear pain, using headphones, redness of ears, and level of hearing to many children they had observed in the field.



Day 4

Ms. Lesniana took over after preliminaries in the morning. She tackled the ear screening form - how to fill out, process of interview and testing for the patient.

The CHWs were then divided into three (3) rooms in the morning. Together with Ms. Lesniana, another two audiologists, Ms. Qylla Lydia Mariano and Ms. Kathleen Dy, also from Better Hearing Philippines facilitated the room for the demonstrations of the participants

Some participants exchanged roles as patient and screener, but some made their trial to their husband, and some brought kids to test. With these, they had an actual engagement with the patients using the skills taught to them.

After their trials, the audiologists encouraged the participants to share their experiences, and asked questions if there were confusions based on their demo-presentations. Many of the participants were engaged and performed the demo with their otoscope provided by Gabay.



The participants met again in the plenary for the topic, “Referral System and Inclusive Education” facilitated by Gabay DCOP, Ms. Amy Mojica. She explained the vital role of the CHWs in identifying these children, referred to medical and education interventions, and further equip the child to maximize the potential.

Layunin:

- Ipaliwanag ang kahalagahan ng REFERRAL SYSTEM sa pagtugon sa karapatang pantao ng mga batang may kapansanan.
- Tukuyin ang kahalagahan ng bawat kasapi ng pamayanan sa pagpatupad ng INCLUSIVE EDUCATION.

“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, working together is a success”
Henry Ford

Prior to the closing program, there was an orientation on the guidelines as the CHWs conduct their practice of vision and hearing screening.

They were requested to complete six (6) children (3 for eye + 3 for ear), ages 0-18, enrolled or not yet enrolled who are suspected with eye/ear problems. Gabay also shared to them who are the partner eye and ear specialists in the sites for the medical intervention referrals, including the schools with trained SPED teachers.

PEEC ended with a short closing program with guest speaker USAID Official, Mr. Henry Grageda. The Municipal Health Officer of Talisay, Dr. Victoria Luna expressed her response to the challenge message by RBI Executive Director, Ms. Amelia Torrente. A certificate of completion was provided to the participants who completed the outputs required.

Vision and Hearing Screening Activities

The 159 trained Community Health Workers on Primary Eye and Ear Care (PEEC) last August 23-26, 2022 conducted Vision and Hearing Screening for children 5 to 18 years old who are enrolled or not yet enrolled but suspected with either eye or ear problems or both. The CHWs utilized the PEEC Training Kit provided to them in conducting the training. Screening forms were also used to gather data of children screened.

Below is the breakdown of children screened by CHWs from August to September 2022:

Table 4: Children screened from August to September 2022

Province	CHWs		Total
	Male	Female	
Batangas	63	50	113
Sorsogon	39	30	69
Southern Leyte	12	8	20
Total	114	88	202

These screened children were referred to health service provider, as needed, and to education facilities for appropriate learning and educational interventions.

A.2 Retraining on Basic Audiometric Testing for Para-Audiometrists

Last February 21, 2020, Gabay conducted a face-to-face Turnover of Audiometer Equipment in Sorsogon City. Due to the pandemic situation, turnover of the same equipment for Batangas on October 28, 2020 and for Maasin City on November 4, 2020 were held online. On May 17-21, 2021, Gabay through PhilEar conducted an online training for stationed Health Personnel and IT support as Para-Audiometrists for Batangas, Sorsogon City, and Maasin City. Due to travel restrictions, no face-to-face practical applications followed after the online training.

In the past two years, there was an increasing number of screened and referred learners with hearing difficulties. It was also observed that there were newly identified and referred deaf students in schools during the school monitoring activities in the Divisions of Batangas City and Batangas, Sorsogon City and Sorogon, and Maasin City and Southern Leyte. Teachers expressed that these students need hearing assessment using an Audiometer.

The above situations prompted the need for these three (3) Hearing/Audiological Test Centers in Batangas Provincial Health Unit, Sorsogon City Health Office, and Maasin City Health Unit to become fully functional. Hence, retraining of the Para-Audiometrists is of utmost importance and necessity.

The follow-through training was for the previously trained Community Health Workers (CHWs) to appropriately test an individual (preferably school-age children) using Pure-tone Audiometry, generate an accurate audiological report, and observe the process of hearing aid fitting. Trained Para-Audiometrists went through mixture of didactics and practical learning scenarios on proper handling of clients. They were also oriented with the operational guidelines for hearing testing and clinic management. They were evaluated with pre and post-test activities such as pen and paper activity for the test interpretation and a practical return demonstration for pure tone testing to ascertain their learning progress.

They were also observed by an Audiologist on taking time to perform, interpret and utilize the required test for diagnostic and amplification, and hearing aid fitting purposes.

Table 5: Participant in the Workshop on Basic Audiometric Testing for Frontline CHWs

CHWs	Batangas	Sorsogon	Maasin City	Total
Nurses	2	2	2	6
Nutrition Officers	3			3
Provincial Health Officer	1	1		2
Midwife	1		1	2
Audiologist	1	1	1	3
IT Officer			1	1
TOTAL	8	4	5	17

The activity was participated by a total of 17 participants, eight (8) CHWs in Batangas, four (4) in Sorsogon, and five (5) in Maasin City. An Information Technology Officer participated in the Maasin City training.

Batangas

On January 9-13, 2023, participants from the Provincial Health Office were provided with a refresher course by Dr. Ron Menor, Gabay partner audiologist.



Day 1

Dr. Menor discussed the Theoretical Anatomy and Physiology of Audiometers. He presented the different equipment in front of the participants to let them discover and learn. The session also covered the topics of Otoscopy and History Taking.

Day 2

The participants had a short review before their practicum. They started exploring the equipment by using and practicing it individually. The Audiologist allowed the participants to apply what they have learned in the session to a real environment.

Pure-tone Audiometry was also elaborated. It was their first time interpreting the calculations taught to them. They had also their demonstration on condition Play Audiometry and simulation of skills with their group.

The participants were assigned to perform testing using tympanometry and Puretone Audiometry. They tested each other using both equipment and make their own interpretation. It took a few hours for them to finish their assignment. The Audiologist observed them and checked their performance individually. He also gave ideas and other techniques on how to appropriately test the early-age children in each group. The remaining hours focused on mentoring.

Day 3



The trained Para-Audiometrists conducted the actual test as part of the inauguration activity participated by officials of Provincial Local Government Unit (PLGU) Batangas and USAID, and other stakeholders in the province.

Another coaching and mentoring session for three days was held in February 2023. On February 22, two trained Para-Audiometrists performed hearing tests to children. The Audiologist gave some instructions on what to do and how testing will be administered like what they had a few weeks ago. A total of five patients were assessed by the Para-Audiometrists using the audiometric equipment. On February 23, there were nine hearing tests conducted that day.

Dr. Menor together with the trained Para-Audiometrists reviewed all the hearing test results they generated. On February 27, the Persons Disability Affairs Office (PDAO) from different municipalities sent the children with hard of hearing or deaf for testing.



Sorsogon

A refresher training for Para-Audiometrists was held in Sorsogon City on January 30 – February 1, 2023.

Day 1

PhilEar and Dr. Ron Menor together with the trained Community Health Workers started downloading the software in the early morning. Dr. Menor did an intensive coaching on how to get the proper and accurate hearing test results. They had their demonstration on how to correctly conduct hearing tests to improve their skills. They discussed more on techniques and strategies this time.

Day 2

One (1) previously assessed client received a hearing aid. There were seven (7) patients that had their hearing impression from the doctor that day. Dr. Menor had a recap on their exercises on how to make their own audiogram analysis and practiced these skills. On the third day, it started with hearing fitting training. There were three (3) learners from different schools who waited for their hearing aids fitting. On this day, Sorsogon City Mayor, Hon. Ester Hamor invited the Audiologist and the trainees to have discussion on how to sustain the services and what assistive devices to be provided specifically for the Deaf. On the last day, there were lectures on Pure-tone Audiometry.

There were three (3) adults who came for hearing aid test as recommended by the City Mayor and they were assessed by the Para-Audiometrists. The Audiologist provided feedback on their practicum and gave more suggestions on how to operate and manipulate the equipment.

Maasin City, Southern Leyte

A refresher training for Para-Audiometrists was held in Maasin City, Southern Leyte on February 8-15, 2023 with Dr. Ron Menor.

Day 1

There were two (2) children referred by a teacher who had their hearing test in the morning. After the testing, the participants gathered to study the hearing test results of the patient-beneficiaries.



Day 2

Dr. Menor did a recap on the subject of Tympanometry. He explained the use and function of the equipment to them. He elaborated on how to correctly handle it and when to use Tympanometry which provides quantitative information about the presence of the fluid in the middle ear. He differentiated it from bone conduction and Pure-tone Audiometry. Each participant tested himself/herself together with his/her partner. They calculated and labeled the results based on the normal values results of Tympanometry.

Day 3

They accepted two (2) candidate-children to be tested that day. One Para-Audiometrist got the Information sheet and the other one got also the Tympanometry. They had their feedbacking with the guidance of the Audiologist. They shared what they observed during the testing and they



studied the test results at the same time. After their feedback, they proceeded to the discussion of the topic on how to get the Audiogram Analysis Report. Dr. Menor introduced them first with different examples and the participants answered based on the short background they had the previous day.

Day 4

One (1) child from Libagon, Southern Leyte was referred by the Local Government Unit. The child underwent a hearing test conducted by Dr. Menor. After the test, the attending Para-Audiometrists got the hearing impression of the child with the permission of the parents. They also had their recap and more activities on Pure-tone Audiometry. On the fifth day, the participants continued producing the Audiogram Analysis and more discussions on the Audiometricians' application and assessment of skills. They made a scenario where there was a patient and an attending Audiometrician to conduct the test. The group was divided into two, assigned as a client and an attending clinician. The group was assigned to complete the activity and made their own Audiogram Analysis. After the practicum, Dr. Menor gave his comments and suggestions with theories and strategies for conducting appropriate practices for Diagnostic Hearing Tests. On the sixth day, Dr. Menor demonstrated the hearing test procedure together with the Para-Audiometrists in front of USAID and local officials and stakeholders. Dr. Menor and a Para-Audiometrist performed the test for the beneficiary and partly on the fitting of the hearing aid. The morning ended with good performance from the trainees who received their certificates, acknowledging them as trained Para-Audiometrists by the Gabay project.



After the event, Focal Persons of the Hearing Center had a short meeting with the Maasin City Mayor, Honorable Nacional Mercado for the sustainability and collaboration in giving interventions. Gabay will have regular evaluation on the status of the equipment in the Center. Gabay will also work with trained Para-Audiometrists and CHWs on the conduct of Primary Eye and Ear Care training, screening of children, and identifying hearing problems to be referred for Diagnostic Hearing Test and enrolment to DepEd schools. Para-Audiometrists in the project sites will also have regular reporting of children undergoing Diagnostic Hearing Tests this year.

A.3 Presentation of the Hearing / Audiological Test Center Operational Guidelines

Gabay's goal of strengthening inclusive education entails the provision of supports in terms of physical facilities, specialized equipment, assistive devices and appropriate learning resources for children with visual and hearing impairments enrolled in inclusive schools.

In line with this, Gabay in coordination with the Heads of the City/ Provincial Health Offices of the project sites identified three Health Centers where the set of equipment for diagnostic hearing evaluation, namely: Computer Set with licensed MS Office software, Diagnostic Audiometer, Tympanometer, Video Otoscope, Pediatric Hearing Aid Test Kit (Listening Tube, Battery Tester, Air Puffer, eight (8) sets of Hearing Aid for Moderate, Severe & Profound with two (2) packs of Batteries and Hearing Aid Dehumidifier and Manual were installed.

With the presence of these resources in health centers, it is deemed necessary that the officials and staff handling these should have ready reference for the efficient and effective operations of the H/ATCs to achieve the intended objectives. Likewise, guidelines were proposed to ensure sustainability of the operations of the Center.

The development of the H/ATC Operational Guidelines has undergone different phases, to wit:

- a. **Preparation of the Draft Contents.** A Technical Consultants who has experienced preparing Manuals/Guidelines relevant to this resource was hired to prepare the initial contents. Dr. Ronald Rey Menor and Dr. Hubert Ramos, the Audiologists of Better Hearing Philippines, Inc (BHPI) provided consultancy services for the H/ATC Operational Guidelines. These Contents were reviewed by the Anchor Person, DCOP and COP and comments were provided for the consultants to revise or enrich. The document was checked and finalized by Dr. Yolanda Quijano, Gabay Chief of Party.
- b. **Validation of the Final Draft.** Validation refers to the process of collecting validity evidences to evaluate the appropriateness of the Contents based on criteria of relevance, accuracy, appropriateness of language used and usability. The validation process entails the preparation of a Rating Scale intended to be accomplished by identified officials and staff/personnel of each H/ATC.

Concerned partners in LGUs were provided with the final draft of the Guidelines with the Rating Scale for their comments and additional inputs. Results of the validation were analyzed and served as the bases in the revision of the document.

- c. **Final Draft and Presentation of the document to USAID, DepEd and LGUs.** Once the final draft of the document was completed, presentation was scheduled. The officials and staff of the Provincial/City Health Centers were the targeted participants for the activity.
- d. **Printing and Distribution of the Document.** Copies will be printed for the document and distributed to the intended users once finalized.

On November 8, 2022, the H/ATC Operational Guidelines was presented by Gabay to the 10 LGU officials from the Provincial/City Health Offices and staff managing the H/ATCs located in Batangas City, Sorsogon City, and Maasin City with three (3) deaf participants. During the presentation, the participants were requested to provide their suggestions and recommendations that will be considered and acted upon in the finalization.



Below are the comments and recommendations to improve the A/HTC Guidelines:

- Include prevalence of persons with hearing impaired figures as per LGU. Consolidate the number of cases in present rate, if available.
- Include pathways on referral because of the lack of hearing aids for the deaf. Provincial budget allocation for hearing aids assistance
- Provide budget allocation in LGU's Annual Implementation Plan for sustainability of the Audiological/Hearing Test Center
- Emphasize room set up, it must be comfortable preferably with air-conditioning

- For personnel, creations of items for long-term service and hiring of social worker as well as member of the para-audio team
- Creation of item for trained audiologist as head of the team; organizational structure should be established and allotment of budget for the Center's operation
- For testing, include regular comprehensive training for personnel to strengthen their skills and be more confident in conducting the test
- For referral, list of Gabay's partner- service providers: private/ public specialists shall be included with sample referral system
- Include referral information like support groups

Gabay has consolidated the inputs and suggestions in preparation for the final operational guidelines for dissemination.

[See Annex for H/ATC Operational Guidelines](#)

A.4 Inauguration of the Hearing/Audiological Test Center

Batangas

Last October 28, 2020, Gabay conducted an online turnover of the set of equipment for diagnostic hearing evaluation namely: Diagnostic Audiometer, Tympanometer, Video Otoscope, Pediatric Hearing Aid Test Kit, Listening Tube, Battery Tester, Air Puffer, Hearing Aids and dehumidifier, and Computer Set to the Batangas Governor, Hon. Hermilando Mandanas and Provincial Health Officer Dr. Rosvilinda Ozaeta. These equipment and tools are housed at the Provincial Health Office (PHO). Gabay also conducted online training last May 17-21, 2021 for the three (3) stationed health personnel and one (1) IT support as Para-Audiometrists. Due to travel restrictions and pandemic priorities, hearing assessments at PHO are put on hold. Gabay also turned-over the equipment and assistive technology to the Batangas City Schools Division Superintendent, Dr. Felizardo Bolaños and SPED Supervisor, Dr. Rosalina Panganiban. These equipment and assistive devices are housed at Batangas City East Elementary School which includes Embosser, Braille Translator Software, Screen Reader Software, Braille, Portable Magnifier for Low Vision, Braille Display, Printer, Scanner, Computer Set, Talking Calculator, Assessment Books, Braille Papers with spirals and Book Covers.

Moreover, Gabay conducted an online training on the utilization of equipment among the teachers of the blind in the aforementioned school and other nearby schools last May 18-19, 2021.

On January 13, 2023, Gabay, together with officials from USAID/Philippines, Pacific Islands and Mongolia inaugurated the Hearing / Audiological Test Center (H/ATC) at Batangas Provincial Health Office and Inclusive Education Community Resource Center (IECRC) at Batangas East Elementary School. The inaugurations aimed to raise public awareness on the new Hearing Test Center and IECRC and to heighten their visibility among stakeholders to rally with the people with disabilities in the community/city/province for access of needed services.

Likewise, the inaugurations gave opportunities for the Partners to reaffirm their commitments during the turn-over ceremony. The inaugurations also highlighted the turnover of the Filipino Sign Language (FSL) Stories which is a collection of DepEd approved short stories adapted to sign language in video formats which are child-friendly and appropriate for Kindergarten to Grade 3 deaf learners. There was a meeting also between Gabay, RBI, USAID, and PLGU Batangas about the enactment, institutionalization, and sustainability of Gabay Ordinance in the province.

Hearing /Audiological Test Center at Batangas Provincial Health Office

The program started with the ribbon cutting and unveiling of the marker in Batangas Provincial Health Office (PHO) where the set of Audiometer and hearing test equipment are stationed. It was led by USAID Mission Director, Ryan Washburn and Batangas Provincial Governor, Hon. Hermilando Mandanas together with Batangas Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Rozvilinda Ozaeta and USAID Office of Education Deputy Director, Ms. Yvette Malcioln





“USAID is deeply committed to the inclusion of people who have vision and hearing disabilities and those who advocate and offer services on behalf of people with disabilities.”

- USAID Mission Director, Ryan Washburn

Mr. Washburn thanked the local government and DepEd Division of Batangas for their partnership to house and care for this equipment, and to ensure that they can be accessible to the community of persons with disability, teachers, parents and their children through the Gabay project.

“This is a symbol of us being able to HEAR the cries and the needs of the people and this could be a motivation for us being able to SEE the need to contribute in the society.

- Batangas, Hon. Gov Hermilando “Dodo” Mandanas



Gov. Mandanas, on his response message reminded those who are in authority, to also be a symbol and example, motivate, inspire and share to other people like USAID, RBI, DepEd and even the province --- that the need is always there.

The Audiometer in this hearing test center and the training provided to the Batangas Provincial Health Officers as Para-Audiometrists were intended to improve the access of people to services in assessing the degree of hearing loss to recommend appropriate medical and educational support. This educational support includes learning resource materials for deaf children. Gabay has provided series of Filipino Sign Language (FSL) trainings, workshops and mentoring to teachers and parents of the deaf. In addition to these interventions, Gabay has produced FSL stories for teachers to improve the reading performance of the deaf learners. These stories for Kindergarten to Grade 3 are video-based electronic version which are signed by a Deaf instructor.



The inauguration highlighted the turnover of these FSL Stories stored in a handy flash drive or USB to be distributed to more than 80 schools with deaf learners under the DepEd Division of Batangas. Batangas Vice Governor, Hon. Jose Antonio “Mark” Leviste also joined the event.

It was followed by an actual hearing assessment for children demonstrated by Gabay partner audiologist, Dr. Ronald Menor, together with a trained para-audiometrist in Batangas PHO. Mr. Washburn, Ms. Malcioln and Gov. Mandanas observed the hearing test inside the center using the USAID donated audiometer and hearing test equipment.

[Maasin City, Southern Leyte](#)

Last November 04, 2020, Gabay conducted an online turned-over of the set of equipment for diagnostic hearing evaluation namely: Diagnostic Audiometer, Tympanometer, Video Otoscope, Pediatric Hearing Aid Test Kit, Listening Tube, Battery Tester, Air Puffer, Hearing Aids and dehumidifier, and Computer Set to the Maasin City Mayor, Hon. Nacional “Nikko” Mercado and CHO Dr. Francilisa Tan. These equipment and tools are housed at the Maasin City Health Office. Gabay conducted online training last May 17-21, 2021 among three (3) stationed health personnel and one (1) IT support as Para-Audiometrists. Face-to-face hearing assessments to children with hearing problems were conducted last May 4-6, 2022.

Gabay also turned-over the equipment and assistive technology to the Maasin City School Division Superintendent, Dr. Genis Murallos and SPED Supervisor, Ms. Bruna Epiz. These equipment and assistive devices are housed at Maasin City SPED Center which includes Embosser, Braille Translator Software, Screen Reader Software, Braille, Portable Magnifier for Low Vision, Braille Display, Printer, Scanner, Computer Set, Talking Calculator, Assessment Books, Braille Papers with Spirals and Book Covers. Gabay also conducted an online training on the utilization of equipment among the teachers of the blind in the aforementioned school and other nearby schools last May 27-28, 2021.

With similar objectives to the inauguration in Batangas, the activity in Southern Leyte was held on February 15, 2023. There was a meeting also that transpired between Gabay, RBI, USAID, LGUs Maasin City, and Southern Leyte that discussed the sustainability measures of the project in the area.

Hearing /Audiological Test Center at Maasin City Health Office

The program started with the ribbon cutting and unveiling of the marker at the City Health Office (CHO) where the set of audiometer and hearing test equipment are stationed. It was led by Ms. Yvette Malcioln of USAID and Hon. Mayor Nacional Mercado together with Dr. Francilisa Tan and Mr. Gary Jamora of RBI.



“We believe ALL children, regardless of race, age or disability have a right to education. Inclusive Education is a process of responding to diverse needs of ALL learners by increasing participation in learning and I am very impressed with the Hearing Test to a child that I saw recently. This is the first step in responding to their

needs.”- USAID Office of Education, Deputy Director, Ms. Yvette Malcioln

Seeing Southern Leyte for the first time, Ms. Malcioln appreciated the warm welcome of Maasin City. Ms. Malcioln thanked and congratulated the local government of Maasin City along with DepEd Division of Maasin City for their partnership to house and care for these equipment and ensure that these can be accessible to the community of persons with disability, teachers, parents and their children through Gabay. She emphasized the importance of the City Government of Maasin’s support to Gabay’s implementation as an excellent example of how USAID projects can be sustained supporting the country’s journey to self-reliance.

“On behalf of the people of Maasin, we are very grateful for this blessing the USAID has extended. We, in Maasin had been to many challenges with so many typhoons and calamities and we want to extend our services to ALL our constituents. With this program, you give them hope and a future.”

- Maasin City, Hon. Mayor Nacional “Nikko” Mercado



Mayor Nikko, on his response message highlighted the importance of strengthening the relationship with stakeholders to provide Southern Leyteño learners a bright future.



“I stand with you today as member of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of the Province of Southern Leyte and on behalf of the Provincial Government to express the Province’s commitment to support an equal access to services and resources among children with sensorial disabilities even after the current project ends”

- Southern Leyte Provincial Board Member, Hon. Yna Marie Loy

Representing Southern Leyte Provincial Vice Governor, Hon. Rosa Emilia Mercado, Hon. Yna Marie Loy shared that the Southern Leyte Provincial Government is currently streamlining all of its programs and plans for the rehabilitation and recovery after the Typhoon Odette by looking and caring for the people first, before anything else. These include children, women, citizens especially with special needs to get their fair share of the programs being implemented.

Trained Para-audiometrists were also awarded after completing the 3-day basic audiometric testing workshop facilitated by Gabay partner audiologist, Dr. Ronald Menor.



Mayor Nikko Mercado observed the hearing test inside the center using the USAID donated Audiometer and hearing test equipment. He also discussed the importance of capacitating the Maasin CHO for the sustainability of the program in the community.

A.5 Enrolment Data of Learners with Sensorial Disabilities from Kindergarten to Grade 3 and Non-Graded Level for the end of SY 2022 – 2023 (as of June 2023)

As of June 2023, the school year 2022-2023 enrolment data indicates a significant increase in enrollment of blind, deaf, and deafblind children across all Gabay sites over four (4) school years 2019-2020 to 2022-2023. The total number of learners with sensorial disabilities in Kinder, Grades 1 to 3, and non-graded classes, has surpassed a twofold increase. Initially, when Gabay started in 2019, there were 165 children enrolled. However, the current enrollment for the year 2022-2023 reveals a total of 432 learners. These Gabay sites comprise the DepEd Divisions of Batangas City and Batangas including the new Division of Sto. Tomas City (Region 4A), Sorsogon City and Sorsogon (Region 5), and Maasin City and Southern Leyte (Region 8).

The graph (Fig. 4) below illustrates the growth from the year 2019 until the year 2023. The baseline in 2019 recorded 165 students, which increased to 189 students in the school year 2019-2020. Subsequently, there was a further improvement of 346 students in the school year 2020-2021, followed by another increase of 394 students in the school year 2021-2022. Finally, in the recent school year of 2022-2023, the number of students reached 432.



Figure 1: Enrolment Growth of Learners with Sensorial Disabilities: Kinder to Grade 3 and Non-Graded between the beginning Gabay Baseline of 2019 and the School year 2022-2023 in Gabay-covered schools.

Gabay's efforts in training community health workers (CHWs) for eye/ear screening and school referrals, as well as engaging local government units and disability peoples' organizations in advocacy and collaborative activities likely contributed to the increase in enrollment. Since Gabay's inception in 2019, these activities have reached a total of 241 schools (Year 4) from 51 schools (Year 1) in the target sites.

Figure 2 below shows the distribution of the total 241 schools, with a significantly higher number of schools in Year 3, with 113 new schools. In Year 3 (SY 2021-2022), Gabay conducted numerous activities such as screenings, teacher training, and parent training as face-to-face interactions slowly resumed. The second highest number of schools reached was in Year 1 (SY 2019-2020) when Gabay initiated activities like screenings prior pandemic. This was followed by 46 schools reached in Year 2 (SY 2020-2021) when Gabay adapted the remote and online training of teachers and distribution of materials. In Year 4 (SY 2022-2023),

Gabay got an extension from USAID and focused its activities in reaching out to the Municipal Health and Social Welfare and Development Offices (MHOs) & (MSWDOs) where central schools in these municipalities did not have educational services for children with sensorial disabilities. These were undertaken through collaboration with the Provincial Health and Social Welfare and Development Offices specifically to obtain the list of deaf, blind, and multiple disabilities with visual impairment for school enrollment from the targeted municipalities.

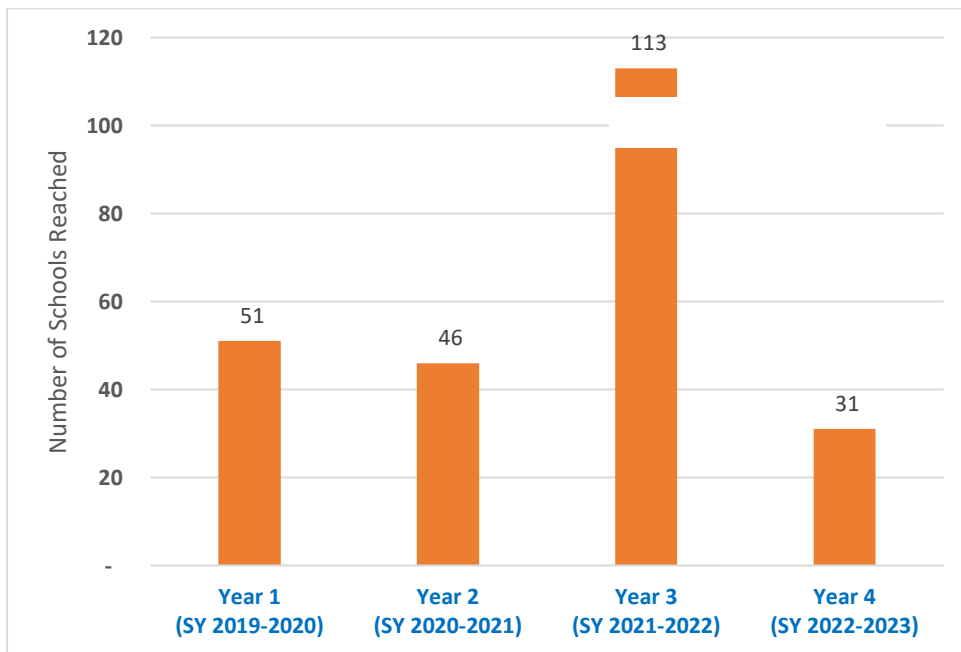


Figure 2: Number of schools reached by Gabay per year in the Gabay-covered divisions.

Out of the aforementioned 241 schools, the graph (Fig. 3) below illustrates that only 89 schools account for 36.93% of the total, reported enrollment of children with sensorial disabilities (CSDs) in the Kinder to Grade 3 and non-grade levels for the school year 2022-2023. Field observations indicate that many parents of children with sensorial disabilities chose to enroll their children in schools with trained SPED teachers for CSDs, rather than enrolling them in general education classes with teachers who received few hours of training. However, the other 152 barangay schools have not reported enrolment yet in the division, despite being open to accepting CSDs. Nevertheless, these schools are committed to conduct child mapping and advocacy activities in their respective communities. This approach not only benefits these children but also helps parents save on transportation expenses.

Initially, in the year 2019-2020, there were only 27 schools providing education for CSDs in the target divisions but this increased to 35 schools at the end of the period. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of schools accommodating CSD learners increased significantly in the following school year, 2020-2021 to 75 schools. Surprisingly, an additional 40 schools started catering to CSD learners during the pandemic, contrary to the expectation of decreased enrollment. In the subsequent school year, 2021-2022, another 11 schools were noted to have begun providing education for CSD learners, bringing the total to 86.

As of June 2023, for the school year 2022-2023, three more schools were added, resulting in a total of 89 schools that now offer education specifically tailored for CSD learners.

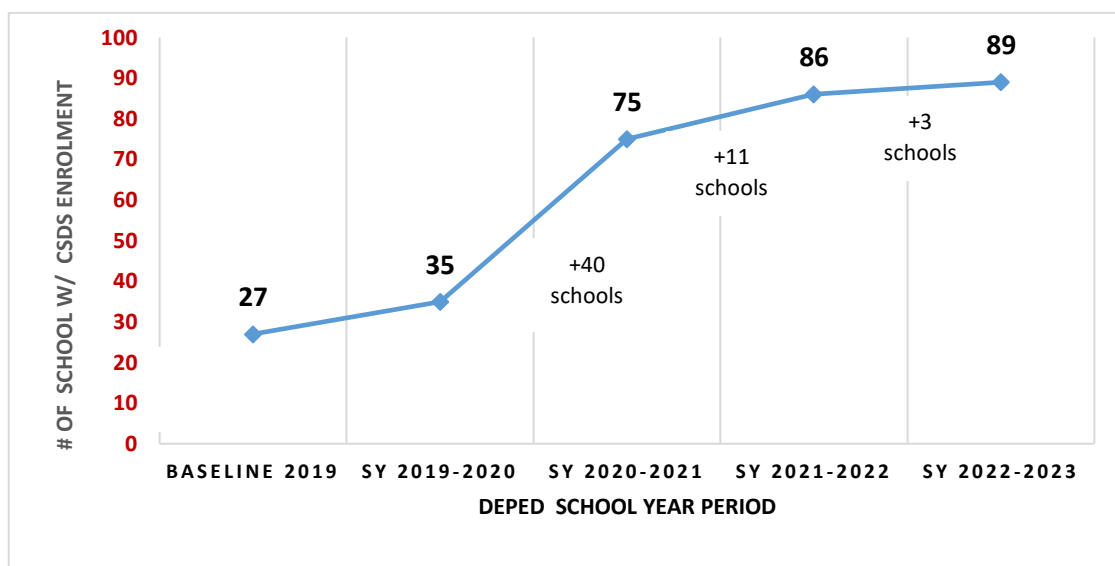


Figure 3: Number of Schools Handling Learners with Sensorial Disabilities: Kinder to Grade 3 and Non-Graded between the Baseline of 2019 and the School year 2022-2023 in Gabay-covered divisions.

In the school year 2022-2023, Gabay provided two enrollment reports to track the progress of enrollment for children with sensorial disabilities. The reports were prepared during significant periods, namely the first quarter of the opening of classes, which concluded in December 2022, and the culmination period of the DepEd classes, which was in June 2023. By comparing these two enrollment reports, Gabay aimed to monitor the progress made in terms of enrollment and identify any patterns that emerged in one school year.

The following data and descriptions provide information regarding the 432 learners in these 89 schools as of June 2023, comparing these with the initial report at the beginning of the school year (Quarter 14 as of December 2022). The data are categorized based on division locations, gender/sex, type of disabilities, grade levels, and profiles of the new enrollees. This comparison will allow for a comprehensive understanding of the changes and trends in enrollment for the school year 2022-2023.

A. Total enrollees by division locations

In the previous report as of December 2022, there were 431 enrolled children with sensorial disabilities (CSDs). However, the June 2023 enrollment update indicates a total of 432 CSDs, reflecting a growth rate of 0.23% in the total enrollment of CSDs.

Upon further analysis as shown in Table 1, it is observed that two divisions are currently showing a minimal increase in CSD enrollment within a school year. Sorsogon Division achieves a 2.6% increase, while Batangas Division has a 1.1% increase in CSD enrollment.

Table 6: Percentage increase and decrease of enrolment of CSDs (children with sensorial disabilities) as of December 2022 and June 2023 across different divisions.

Division	Total enrolment as of December 2022 (SY 2022-2023)	Recent Enrolment as of June 2023 (SY 2022-2023)	Percentage Changes (Increase/Decrease) in Enrolment
Batangas City	24	23	-4.16%
Batangas	184	174	1.1%
Sto. Tomas City		12	
Sorsogon City	31	31	0%
Sorsogon	116	119	2.6%
Maasin City	29	26	-10.34%
Southern Leyte	47	47	0%
Total	431	432	.23%

Notably, during this recent period, DepEd established a new division called Sto. Tomas City. As a result, two schools from Batangas Division were transferred to this new division but the transfer did not affect the enrolment data of Batangas Division. The enrollment numbers in the Sorsogon City and Southern Leyte Divisions remained unchanged which means there were no registered dropouts within a year. However, both Batangas City and Maasin City Divisions experienced decrease in CSD enrollment by 4.16% and 10.34% respectively. The end-line EGRA evaluation conducted in April 2023 revealed that these students transferred residences. Gabay communicated with the schools to determine the new locations of schools where these children transferred to ensure that they continued their studies.

B. Total enrollees by Gender/Sex

Both the December 2022 report and the current June 2023 report highlight a higher representation of males among children with sensorial disabilities. In the previous report of December 2022, out of the total enrolled CSDs, 229 students, or 53.15% are males, while 202 students, or 46.86% are females. In the recent enrollment data (as of June 2023), which accounts for a total of 432 enrollees (as shown in Table 2), 227 students, or 52.55% are males, while 205 students, or 47.45% are females. Among the 227 male students, the distribution is as follows:

- 12 students (5.29%) are from Batangas City
- 92 students (40.53%) are from Batangas
- 8 students (3.53%) are from Sto. Tomas City
- 14 students (6.17%) are from Sorsogon City
- 60 students (26.44%) are from Sorsogon
- 16 students (7.05%) are from Maasin City
- 25 students (11.02%) are from Southern Leyte

These figures provide a breakdown of the male student population across different divisions. The data shows that Batangas and Sorsogon have the highest representation of male students, followed by Southern Leyte, Maasin City, Sorsogon City, Sto. Tomas City, and Batangas City, in descending order. Regarding the 205 female students, 82 (40%) are from Batangas, 59 (28.78%) are from Sorsogon, 22 (10.74%) are from Southern Leyte, 17 (8.3%) are from Sorsogon City, 11 (5.37%) are from Batangas City, 10 (4.88%) are from Maasin City, and 4 (1.96%) are from Sto. Tomas City.

Table 7. Learners with Sensorial Disabilities SY 2022-2023 in Gabay covered schools by sex/gender as of June 2023.

Division	Learners with Sensorial Disabilities		Total
	Male	Female	
Batangas City	12	11	23
Batangas	92	82	174
Sto. Tomas City	8	4	12
Sorsogon City	14	17	31
Sorsogon	60	59	119

Maasin City	16	10	26
Southern Leyte	25	22	47
Grand Total	227	205	432

This data highlights a gender disparity in enrollment patterns among children with sensorial disabilities. As of December 2022, across all divisions, there were more males enrolled than females. However, in the recent enrollment update, the Division of Sorsogon City stands out as the only division where the female population slightly exceeds that of males by at least three students. In contrast, the remaining divisions still show a higher number of male students compared to females.

C. Total enrollees by Disability type

In this report, CSDs are categorized into different subgroups, including low vision (LV), blind (B), deaf or hard-of-hearing (DHH), deaf low vision (DLV), and multiple disabilities (MD), which encompasses MDLV, MDB, and MDDHH.

According to the data (as shown in Table 3), there is a 2.77% increase in the enrollment of low-vision students between December 2022 and June 2023. Similarly, the number of blind learners also increased by 2.38% during the same period.

Table 8. Percentage increase and decrease of enrolment of CSDs (children with sensorial disabilities) as of December 2022 and June 2023 across different types of disabilities.

Type of Disability	Total enrolment as of December 2022 (SY 2022-2023)	Recent Enrolment as of June 2023 (SY 2022-2023)	Percentage Changes (Increase/Decrease) in Enrolment
Low Vision	72	74	2.77%
Blind	42	43	2.38%
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	282	280	-0.71%
Deafblind	2	2	0%
DeafLV	3	3	0%
Multiple Disabilities	30	30	0%
Total	431	432	.23%

However, there is a decrease of 0.71% in the enrollment of deaf learners. The recent visit during the endline which informed Gabay of these deaf learners' change of residence may be the reason for these changes, but further analysis may be necessary to understand the underlying factors contributing to these trends.

It is worth noting that children who are deaf-blind, deaf with low vision, and children with multiple disabilities remained enrolled, indicating that these specific categories do not show significant changes in the enrollment numbers. The mention of these learners emphasizes the importance of considering the diverse needs and characteristics of CSDs within different categories. This information highlights the ongoing presence and enrollment of students with specific combinations of disabilities, signifying the need for tailored support and inclusive educational strategies to meet their unique requirements.

Table 9 below provides further details of all categories of children with sensorial disabilities of the recent enrolment per division. Out of the total 432 learners with sensorial disabilities, 74 (17.13%) fall under the category of Low Vision, 43 (9.96%) are classified as Blind, 280 (64.82%) are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing, 2 (0.47%) are identified as DeafBlind, 3 (0.7%) are Deaf with Low Vision, and 30 (6.95%) are learners with multiple disabilities (MD) involving both visual and hearing impairments. Among the 30 learners with multiple disabilities, 9 (26.67%) have MD-Low Vision, 18 (60%) are classified as MD-Blind, and 3 (10%) are categorized as MD-Deaf.

Table 9. Learners with Sensorial Disabilities SY 2022-2023 in Gabay covered schools by disability type

Divisions	Learners with Sensorial Disabilities								Total
	Low Vision	Blind	Deaf/ HOH	Deaf Blind	Deaf LV	Multiple Disabilities with			
						LV	Blindness	Deafness	
Batangas City	9	1	13	-			-		23
Batangas	21	13	119	1		9	8	3	174
Sto. Tomas City	1	1	10						12
Sorsogon City	8	4	16	-			3		31
Sorsogon	24	13	75	1	3		3		119
Maasin City	2	3	17	-			4		26
Southern Leyte	9	8	30	-			-		47
Total	74	43	280	2	3	9	18	3	432

According to the observation, deaf children make up more than half, specifically 65%, of the total population of children with sensory disabilities. It should be noted that the data has limitations, as some children have not yet been diagnosed by medical specialists. Consequently, the ranges of their hearing and vision abilities cannot be determined. Gabay is actively working on addressing this issue, particularly now that face-to-face interactions have resumed.

D. Total enrollees by grade level

During the period from December 2022 to June 2023 (as shown in Table 5), there is an overall increase in enrollment across three (3) grade levels. Specifically, Grade 1 has an enrollment growth of 8.1%, Grade 2 with a 2.56% increase, and Grade 3 with a 4.54% rise in student numbers. However, both Kindergarten and non-graded classes have a decline in enrollment, with Kindergarten decreasing by 1.26% and non-graded classes by 1.72%.

Despite the decrease in enrollment for non-graded learners, it is important to acknowledge the significant number of children who are placed in the non-graded category. This indicates that there is a considerable population of students who have unique educational needs that are not aligned with the traditional grade levels.

Table 10. Percentage increase and decrease of enrolment of CSDs (children with sensorial disabilities) as of December 2022 and June 2023 across different grade levels

Grade Level	Total enrolment as of December 2022 (SY 2022-2023)	Recent Enrolment as of June 2023 (SY 2022-2023)	Percentage Changes (Increase/ Decrease) in Enrolment
Kindergarten	79	78	-1.26%
Grade 1	37	40	8.1%
Grade 2	39	40	2.56%
Grade 3	44	46	4.54%
Non-Graded	232	228	-1.72%
Total	431	432	.23%

Table 11 below provides specific distribution of students across different grade levels of the recent enrolment data. Out of the total 432 CSDs, 78 students (18.06%) are in Kindergarten, 40 (9.26%) are in Grade 1, 40 (9.26%) are in Grade 2, 46 (10.62%) are in Grade 3, and the majority, 228 (52.78%), are classified as Non-Graded.

Table 11. Learners with Sensorial Disabilities SY 2022-2023 as of December 2022 in Gabay covered schools
by grade level

Site	Kinder	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Non-Graded	Total
Batangas City	2	6	4	5	6	23
Batangas Province	42	9	14	13	96	174
Sto. Tomas City	4		1	2	5	12
Sorsogon City	5	6	5	5	10	31
Sorsogon Province	16	14	5	9	75	119
Maasin City	3	2	2	5	14	26
Southern Leyte	6	3	9	7	22	47
Grand Total	78	40	40	46	228	432

Before the pandemic, these Non-Graded learners fell into several categories: i) new enrollees, ii) students with additional disabilities undergoing a transition program to other grade levels, and iii) overage learners transitioning into the Alternative Learning System for livelihood or more age-appropriate academic opportunities. However, post-pandemic, the number of Non-Graded learners increased from 211 in the school year 2021-2022 to 228 in the current school year 2022-2023.

The decision to place deaf children in non-graded classes for the school year 2022-2023 can be observed. This was done because teachers' assessment reveals these children have forgotten the signs they learned and other concepts taught in their previous years. Teachers and school heads mentioned that many Deaf learners experienced learning gaps due to limited exposure to sign language at home, lack of interaction with deaf peers, and absence of teachers proficient in sign language. Placing these students in non-graded classes is seen as a temporary measure to help them catch up with their academic progress. It also aims to provide a more conducive environment for communication and language learning, grouping Deaf children of the same academic level (not necessarily based on grade level) together and providing them with the necessary instructions.

Similar considerations apply to learners who are blind.

E. Profile of New Enrollees in SY 2022-2023

Based on the 14th quarter report, it indicates that there were 100 new enrollees for the recent school year (2022-2023). However, in the current ending period of the school year, there has been a noticeable increase, with a total of 103 new enrollees.

Among the DepEd divisions, most of them have reported the same number of new enrollees. However, there are two divisions that deviate from this pattern. Southern Leyte has recorded an additional 2 new enrollees, while the new division, Sto. Tomas City has reported 1 new enrollee.

These numbers suggest a slight overall increase in new enrollees compared to the earlier report. It is worth noting that Gabay trained new teachers in the province of Southern Leyte last February 2023 and LGU visits together with the PSWDO of Southern Leyte. We are expecting additional reports of enrollees in the coming year for this division.

Figure 4-provides an overview of the 103 new enrollees in SY 2022-2023, constituting 23.85% of the total in 432 by grade level. Out of these 103 new enrollees, 64 (62.14%) are placed in non-graded classes, and 30 (29.13%) are enrolled in Kindergarten. Additionally, there are 5 students, or 4.86% in Grade 1, 3 students, or 2.92% in Grade 2, and 1 student, or 0.97% in Grade 3.

The table below provides a breakdown of the new enrollment distribution by location. Out of the total 103 new enrollees, 6 students (5.83%) come from Batangas City, 43 students (41.75%) from Batangas, and 1 student (0.97%) from Sto. Tomas City, 5 students (4.86%) from Sorsogon City, 27 students (26.22%) from Sorsogon, 9 students (8.74%) from Maasin City, and 12 students (11.65%) from Southern Leyte.

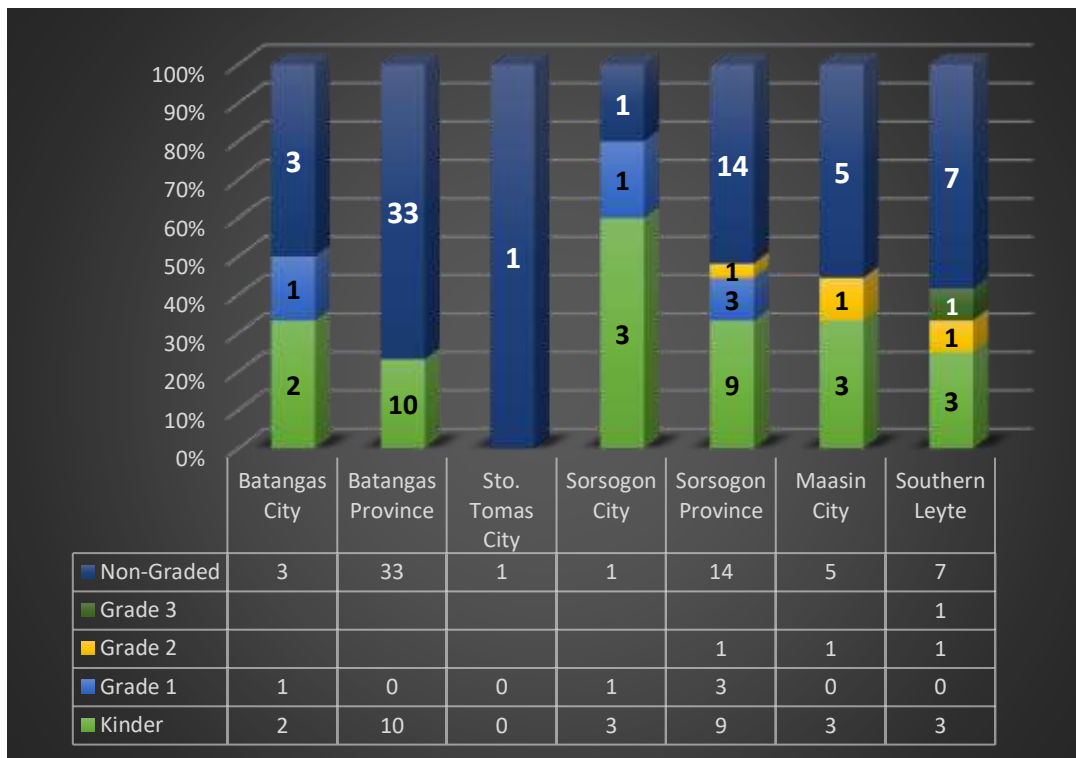


Figure 4. New Enrollees of Learners with Sensorial Disabilities SY 2022-2023 in Gabay-covered schools

In addition to providing support for students in Kinder to Grade 3 with sensorial disabilities (CSDs), Gabay also extended its assistance to students in Grades 4 to 6. These higher-grade students received support through the training of their teachers, and the provision of learning resource materials, including the Filipino Sign Language Dictionary and Stories, to support their educational journey. Furthermore, Gabay conducted training sessions for the primary caregivers of these students, focusing on sign language and understanding CSDs, together with the parents of kindergarten to Grade 3.

For the school year 2022-2023, a total of 123 students with sensorial disabilities are enrolled in Grades 4 to 6. The distribution of these students across different locations is outlined below:

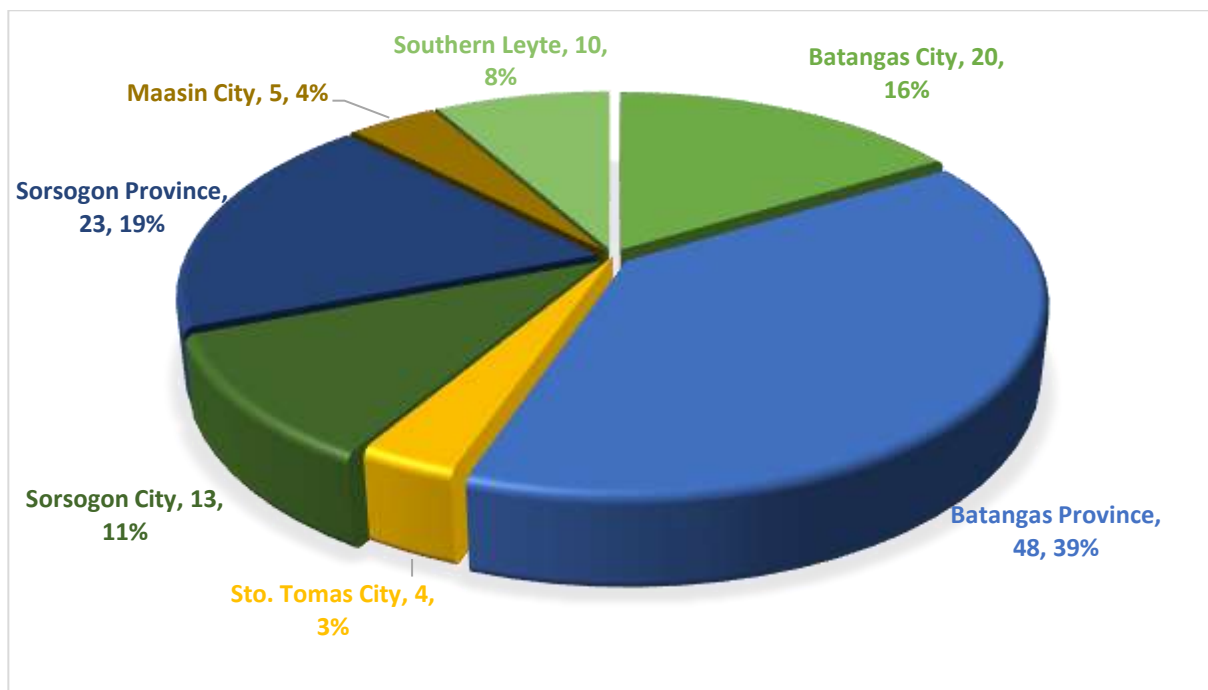


Figure 5. Grades 4-6 Learners with Sensorial Disabilities SY 2022-2023 in Gabay-covered school.

Among the total 123 learners, the highest number, 48 students or 39%, are from Batangas Province. Following closely, there are 23 learners or 19% from Sorsogon Province. The third highest number of students, 20 learners, or 16%, are from Batangas City, and 13 learners or 11% are from Sorsogon City.

Additionally, there are 10 learners, or 8% from Southern Leyte, 5 learners, or 4% from Maasin City, and the lowest number, 4 learners, or 3%, from Sto. Tomas City.

The significant increase in enrollment across all sites since 2019 demonstrates the positive impact of knowledge sharing and collaboration between schools and the local community. It is crucial to recognize that schools and the local community should not operate in isolation but instead work together to achieve their goals. Gabay's partnership with Municipal Health Offices (MHOs), Municipal Social Welfare Development Offices (MSWDOs), and People's Disability Affairs Offices (PDAOs) for screening and advocacy activities has yielded positive outcomes. By establishing a referral system, Gabay ensures that children with sensorial disabilities receive appropriate care not only from nearby medical specialists but also from schools directly.

However, despite the success in increasing enrollment, various challenges and opportunities have been identified. One challenge is the capacity and resource management faced by schools, including issues such as overcrowding of students with multiple needs, insufficient resources to address their unique needs, and a shortage of special needs education teachers. Schools address these challenges through teacher mentoring and self-study, allowing teachers to develop new strategies and approaches.

While there is increase in enrollment and challenges persist, but this experience brings opportunities for schools to grow and develop. Gabay has provided training to teachers from different schools who are not from Special Education (SPED) centers. As a result of the enrollment of children with sensorial disabilities, some schools received attention and funding from local government units to establish new centers catering to all children with disabilities in the area and enhance their educational opportunities. This led to program expansion, and proposals for hiring additional teachers.

Overall, the increase in enrollment reflects the successful collaboration between various stakeholders, and although challenges exist, they also pave the way for growth, development, and improved educational opportunities for children with sensorial disabilities.

B. INTERMEDIATE RESULT 2

Improved reading performance among Blind and Deaf learners

- Skills Training for 46 Teachers and Parents of Children with Deafblindness and Multiple Disabilities with Visual Impairment (MDVI) from the 3 Divisions
- Hybrid Deaf Mentorship for 189 Parents and Teachers from the 3 Divisions
- Training of 194 Teachers for Enhancing Reading Experiences of Children with Sensorial Disabilities (CSDs) from the 3 Divisions
- Training of 152 Parents with LGU officials on Supporting Children with Sensorial Disabilities (CSDs) from 3 Divisions
- Technical Assistance and Mentoring on Program Quality Indicator (PQI) to 2 schools in the Division of Sorsogon City by Perkins International and Gabay specialist
- Presentation of Operations Manual of the Inclusive Education Community Resource Center (IECRC) to 20 officials from the schools, divisions, regions and central office
- Inauguration of 2 Inclusive Education Community Resource Centers (IECRCs) in the Divisions of Batangas City and Maasin City
- Production of Additional Learning Materials for Blind and Deaf
- Second Feedback on the Filipino Sign Language Curriculum
- Braille Reading Assessment Pre-Test conducted to 17 blind children and Post-Test to 15 blind children
- EGRA Endline Evaluation conducted to 139 deaf children
- Monitoring and Technical Assistance Provided

B.1 Skills Training for Teachers and Parents of Children with Deafblindness and Multiple Disabilities with Visual Impairment (MDVI)

Children who are deafblind and those with multiple disabilities with visual impairment (MDVI) have unique needs, not just the addition of hearing or vision loss or a concomitant disability but the impact of these disabilities together. A lot of times, teachers and other professionals who work with these types of learners face challenges that they may not be equipped for.

Being part of Gabay's beneficiaries, these populations need to be attended to in its final year of implementation. As part of its goal of increasing access to quality education among children with sensorial disabilities, one identified hindrance is the lack of appropriate education intervention in schools brought about by the absence or insufficiency of training provided to teachers which results in parents' hesitancy to send these children to school.

Last February 2022, Gabay held two Focused Group Discussions (FGD) for teachers and parents of children with deafblindness and MDVI. Based on the responses and discussions from the two FGDs and post-FGD discussions, both the teachers and parents need specialized training in handling those types of learners. Specifically, the following are the needs identified which will be included in the specialized training: 1) Most teachers and parents expressed their difficulties in understanding children with deafblindness and with MDVI because a lot of the identified children need proper medical diagnosis and assessment so that the intervention can be properly designed to meet their needs. 2) They were also requesting Gabay’s help in handling children with multiple disabilities, specifically on topics such as developing meaningful communication, positive behavior support, and partnership between parents and teachers. Moreover, support and focus are also needed for parents and teachers particularly in building their support system and developing their ability in accessing available resources for their children.

Hence, skills training for teachers and parents was designed for them to i) hold positive expectations for these children; ii) see their own role in creating enabling environments and expanding opportunities for them; and iii) identify and utilize appropriate strategies to build their learning

Table 12. Participants during the Skills Training for Teachers and Parents of Children with Deafblindness and Multiple Disabilities with Visual Impairment

Project Site	Teachers		Total	Parents		Total	Total	
	Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female
Batangas City & Batangas Province	0	9	9	0	6	6		15
Sorsogon City & Sorsogon Province	1	1 1	12	0	9	9	1	20
Maasin City & Southern Leyte	0	5	5	0	5	5		10
Total	1	25	26	0	20	20	1	45
							46	

A total of 46 participants composed of teachers and parents attended the training via face-to-face and via zoom. Of the total number, 26 (57%) were teachers and 20 (44%) were parents or primary caregivers.

The table above shows that 21 or 46% of the participants came from Sorsogon City and Sorsogon Province, 15 or 33% from Batangas City and Batangas Province, and 10 or 21.7% from Maasin City and Southern Leyte.

Day 1

The first day of the training proper started with the sharing of success stories from parents and teachers of children with DB and MDVI. The speakers shared their journey, may it be fun or challenging, in handling and teaching these learners. The invited speakers were Mrs. Rhoda Nocum, a retired teacher of children with MDVI; Mrs. Linda Choy with daughter Kara Choy who has MDVI; and Mrs. Celia Garcia with daughter Monica who has deafblindness. The interesting sharing of stories was followed by a question and answer time, where the participants learned different strategies and received a lot of encouragement from the speakers. The participants also shared that the stories were really an eye-opener, seeing how these learners, their families, and teachers were able to overcome the challenges of having complex disabilities. Some teachers also shared that they realized that there are “no limits” to what these children could learn if they just believe in their abilities and of course given the appropriate intervention and support.



The last two topics in the morning session include Rights of Children with Disabilities and Child Safeguarding and Anti-Human Trafficking which were discussed by Ms. Marie Joyce Lopez and Ms. Joy Magsubar, respectively.



The first topic in the afternoon session was Understanding DB and MDVI where the participants were given a chance to somehow understand how is it to be blind with additional disabilities through a simulation activity. The objectives of the session were for the participants to i) recognize that deafblindness and multiple disabilities are a disability of access to information that results in significant challenges in interaction and learning, and to ii) identify the internal and external factors that influence a student's ability to learn. The participants were blindfolded while some were given low-vision simulation goggles and were asked to perform different activities while using the simulation tools. The topic was facilitated by Ms. Mila Wayno, former Rehabilitation Specialist of Resources for the Blind, Inc., and Ms. Amy Mojica, Gabay Deputy Chief of Party.





Ms. Mojica ended the session emphasizing to the participants the importance of having a balance between the internal and external factors affecting the learning of a child with MDVI or DB. She also shared that providing various learning opportunities for these students is one of the ways that would help these types of children to learn.

Another highlight of the training was when Dr. Yolanda Quijano and the rest of the specialists/consultants offered one-on-one mentorship to teachers who needed coaching in terms of managing their class schedules, since it is one of the identified problems that the teachers mentioned during the Focused Group Discussions last February. The participants who received this one-on-one coaching were very willing and appreciative of Gabay's efforts to help them with this problem, despite being done beyond their training time.



Day 2

The first topic for Day 2's session was Person Centered Planning. The main goal of this topic was to help guide the participants, specifically the teachers, to a mapping process that would help them reflect on their own practice. The bulk of the time allotted for this topic was for creating different types of Maps. These maps would help the participants plan for the next stage of their students' lives and the focus is on creating opportunities for their students to develop personal relationships, have positive roles in their community life, increase control of their own lives, and develop skills and abilities to achieve these goals. Since the actual mapping process would take at least 12 weeks to complete, which also includes other team members such as the family of the child, therapists, and other significant people in the child's life, the participants were guided to learn the process.



The participants were asked to practice creating three (3) types of Maps, namely, Background Map, Places-Relationship-Activities Map, and Dream Map for the child. -After creating each type of map, some participants were asked to introduce their student or child through the presentation of the maps they have created. The facilitator concluded the topic by stressing that planning for the future of a child with DB or MDVI should not wait for the time when the child is already transitioning to adulthood, it should be done now while the child is young.

The topics for the afternoon session were Building Partnership with Teachers facilitated by Ms. Digna Parcon, teacher and parent of a child with MDVI, and Parents and Building Partnership with the Community facilitated by Ms. Marie Alonzo, a parent of a learner with MDVI.

The objectives for these topics include i) understanding the importance of building partnerships with teachers, parents and the community, ii) recognizing the importance of collaboration between parents and teachers when setting goals for students, and iii) knowing the benefits of partnership with the community.



As part of the output of their workshop activity, the participants were tasked to create a community map where they would identify community partners with whom they could seek partnership with for the needs of these children.

The day was concluded by the continuation of the mentoring of teachers who needed coaching in managing class schedules, where Dr. Yolanda Quijano presented examples of multi-grade programs for children with sensorial disabilities. This time the samples were presented and shared with the whole group, not just the participants who needed coaching.



Day 3

The third day of the training started with Ms. Babylene Palma’s topic on Functional Assessment and Functional Curriculum. The session’s objectives include: i) learning to identify learner’s interests that could be included in the curriculum, ii) introducing functional activities as a method of teaching that best uses all the “sensory and cognitive principles, iii) creating opportunities for life skills, and iv) developing fun-filled learning activities to motivate the learner and enjoy learning in a variety of setting.

One of the highlights of the session was when Ms. Palma showed video samples of various functional activities given to her students with deafblindness and MDVI. Ms. Palma also shared with the participants the new K-12 Transition Curriculum for Children with Disabilities and how this can be adapted to learners with DB and MDVI. The participants were very appreciative of the session because they were enlightened to more ideas on how to teach their students using functional and meaningful activities.



The next session was facilitated by Mrs. Linda Choy which was about Creating Learning Environments at Home. The topic was co-facilitated by another parent of a child with Deafblindness. The highlight of the session was when the facilitators shared video examples of them letting their children with DB/MDVI participate in home activities that are meaningful and fun for their children.

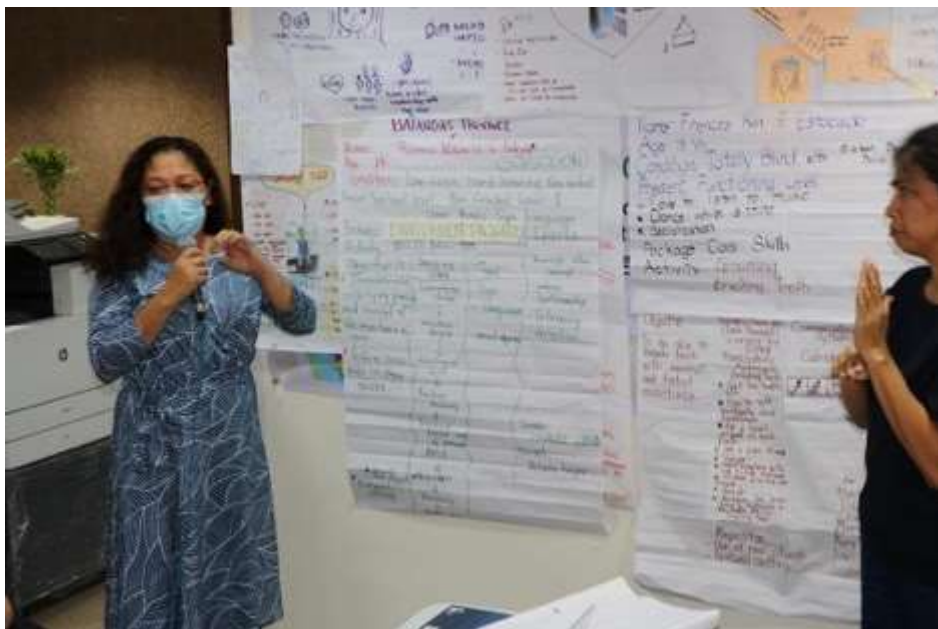
The first session in the afternoon was Teaching Strategies and was again facilitated by Ms. Babylene Palma. She shared with the participants effective strategies for teaching children and how these strategies were presented to children with different learning needs.

The last session of the third day was about Communication, which was one of the main concerns identified during the FGD last February. This topic was facilitated by Ms. Amy Mojica and Ms. Nathalie Pigar, the main objective was to help participants understand that providing varied opportunities for the learners to communicate can develop and improve their ~~learner's~~ participation in the environment.

The facilitators shared various communication strategies that the teachers and parents can use when communicating with their children/students. One of the highlights of the session was when the facilitators showed concrete examples of the communication board and calendar system and taught the participants how to properly use these communication strategies specifically for children with DB and MDVI.

Day 4

The last day of the training started with a workshop where the participants were tasked to create a sample lesson plan which includes the strategies they learned from yesterday's sessions. Selected participants shared their outputs with the whole group.



The last session of the training was the Gallery of Learning where an assigned participant from each project site was tasked to give a short summary of their outputs per site and how they will be using the things they learned from the training when they go back to their respective areas of assignment. The activity was synthesized by Ms. Amy Mojica.

This is Gabay's first hybrid training where most of the participants were in the training venue and some attended via zoom. One of the learnings realized when conducting hybrid training was to allow online attendees to participate more in the activities - be acknowledged during the sessions specifically during Q&A and also give them specific activity during workshop sessions.

Gabay commends the willingness and eagerness of the teachers and parents who attended this training and hopes that the learning they acquired during the four-day training will also be shared with other teachers and be used to help their children and students with deafblindness and those with MDVI improve their quality of life.

B.2 Hybrid Deaf Mentorship on Filipino Sign Language (FSL) to Resource Teachers and Parents of the Deaf Children from Kindergarten to Grade 3

Gabay supports the strengthening of Filipino Sign Language in the three (3) sites for deaf learners as mandated by law on the use of FSL specifically in the area of education. Gabay assists in its implementation through training of teachers and partnership with the stakeholders working with the deaf.

Gabay conducted the very first training on FSL in which the teachers of the deaf participated. This training entitled, Introductory FSL Course was conducted last August 3-18, 2020, followed by the workshop on reading development last September 3-25, 2020 in reference to the modified FSL Curriculum. After the training, several feedbacks included on their requests like the continuous learning on Filipino Sign Language (FSL) and the strategies in teaching deaf children.

Gabay adapted the College of St. Benilde effective way Deaf adults/educators served as mentors to teachers, parents and students.

It was during the pandemic that Gabay initiated mentoring activities for teachers of the deaf and parents who could access the zoom. The said mentorship program was conducted six times (6x) catering to different teacher- and parent- participants every time and as planned, they were accommodated by the Deaf mentors. It was done in a total of 9 hours per participant and sessions were conducted in plenary or whole groups and break out or smaller groups.

Based on Deaf Mentors feedback, many of the teachers knew only a bit of signs and only few were already fluent in using the signs. Deaf mentors proposed that teachers still need to continue their training on FSL and interactive communication with deaf children should be the priority. They also observed that teachers were having different levels of knowledge in FSL. But they have seen parents more interested in learning FSL than the teachers. They recommended the teachers to learn and incorporate non-verbal, gesture, body language and facial expression to deaf children to get their interest and they could enjoy and have fun in learning.

It is for this reason that Gabay conducted the FSL Mentorship to teachers and parents. Gabay prioritized teachers who have basic knowledge on signs, and parents/families who only know basic or nothing at all.

This Gabay Deaf Mentorship to teachers and parents has the following objectives: i) increase knowledge and skills on FSL and develop their confidence on using FSL for students/children; ii) improve their ability to communicate and work together, and develop better awareness and sensitivity to the deaf and hard of hearing; and iii) develop insight into the nature of language and culture, creating awareness for the deaf students' own culture and language. These objectives will help the desired key result which is to increase reading comprehensions and confidence of the deaf children.

Since schools were still on vacation and some areas did not have good internet connection, Gabay applied a hybrid approach. Gabay conducted online to the participants in Batangas City and Batangas. Sorsogon City, Sorsogon and Southern Leyte had face to face training.

With these two approaches: via Zoom and In-person, the mentoring was handled by Gabay Deaf Trainers, named below with Mr. Justine Barcenas, Gabay Field Coordinator as the anchor person for the activity:

1. Ron Daryl Quinio
2. Omar Eduarte Emata
3. Ryan Clint Marcaida
4. Floyd Benedict Basco

Gabay, in consultation with the Deaf mentors, prepared all topics and lessons. Prior to the activities, participants joining online were requested to access the registration link, and pretest and posttest link.

The mentorship was conducted in 16 hours either face-to-face or Zoom. In zoom, the sessions were conducted in a plenary or whole group. Teachers gathered in the morning, while parents were catered in the afternoon. The face-to-face training was different. Deaf Mentors selected particular schools with teachers who have limited signing and they were trained together with the parents.



Zoom and In-person activities were non-voicing. All topics and announcements were done via signs, gestures, body languages, or type-words in the chat box. No sign interpreters were provided in all the sessions. So, for hours straight in zoom daily sessions, participants were muted but their videos are on. For In-person training, participants communicated through fingerspelling, gestures or signs.

Deaf Mentors prepared small white board and markers just in case there are return demonstrations wherein they needed to mention names and signs if not easily understood by the participants.

There were signing quizzes every end of the topic. The required outputs before Certificate Distribution are the following: Zoom Output: Submit 3 videos of themselves signing 3 short stories (5-10 sentences); and In-person Output: Presentations of 1 short story through signing (8-10 sentences)

The activities for deaf mentoring were conducted simultaneously by the four (4) Deaf Mentors with Gabay Deaf Field Coordinator Mr. Justine Barcenas. All meetings and coordination were facilitated by him and including topic discussions and concerns raised from the deaf mentors.

Table 13. Participants to Gabay's FSL Mentoring Activities

SITES	Teachers		Parents		TOTAL		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Batangas with Mr. Ron Quinio via Zoom	4	29	8	36	12	65	77
Sorsogon with Mr. Ryan via Face to Face	1	8	2	11	3	19	22
Sorsogon with Mr. Omar via Face to Face	0	6	1	17	1	23	24
So. Leyte with Mr. Floyd via Face to Face	3	48	2	13	5	61	66
Total	8	91	13	77	21	168	189
	99		90				

It can be gleaned above that there were more participants for both teachers and parents attending in Batangas via Zoom with 77 or 40.74 %. This was followed by Southern Leyte with 66 or 34.92% and Sorsogon by Mr. Omar with 24 or 12.70 %. The least number of participants was from Sorsogon led by Mr. Ryan with 22 or 11.64%. Among the participants, there were 168 or 88.89% females and 21 or 11.12% males.

There were more schools involved in Batangas with 33 schools, while only 6 in Sorsogon for both mentors, and 16 schools in Southern Leyte. During the training of Sogod Central School in Southern Leyte, the school head invited 13 barangay schools to learn sign language.

B.3 Teachers' Training for Enhancing Reading Experiences of Children with Sensorial Disabilities

Divisions of Batangas City and Batangas

In its last year of implementation, Gabay aims to accelerate activities that strengthen the education of children with sensorial disabilities with more focused subject matter as recommended by the School-to-School (STS) International's midterm evaluation results. According to STS, Gabay should build on the successful content already delivered to parents and supplemented with more specialized topics or coaching and incentives for teachers to participate and skill up. One way of doing so might be to work with the DepEd to create an informal specialization or badging program which might also contribute to the sustainability of the trainings by setting the foundation for DepEd ownership and buy-in.

With this recommendation, Gabay ventures on supporting the teachers through "Face-to-Face Training for Enhancing Reading Experiences of Children with Sensorial Disabilities". The main goal of this training is to increase teachers' competence in providing instructional interventions to school-age students with blindness and deafness. The training aims also to upgrade teachers' knowledge, and skills related to instructional interventions, and demonstrate strategies in addressing learning lags in building up emergent literacy/reading readiness, reading comprehension, and writing skills among blind and deaf learners.

The training was held on November 19, 2022 in Batangas City. It was participated by fifty-one (51) teachers from Divisions of Batangas and Batangas City. Of the total number of participants, 36 or 71% are teachers for the deaf and hard of hearing while 15, or 29% are teachers for the blind and low vision.

The training began with the session entitled "Gabay Teachers in the Inclusion Program for Children with Sensorial Disabilities," which was facilitated by Dr. Yolanda Quijano. The session's

objectives include acquiring working knowledge on the common principles of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Inclusive Education (IE) and applying the appropriate model(s) of IE in providing educational services to children with sensorial disabilities. As the first activity of the session, the teachers answered a 10-question self-assessment about inclusive education which was followed by a discussion about the key principles of UDL and IE and Models of Teacher Collaboration for Inclusion where the teachers reflected on identifying the common principles of UDL and IE.



The second session was a Workshop on the Identification of Causes of Learning Lags Related to Reading facilitated by Gabay Staff, Ms. Joy Magsubar and Ms. Maui Gabriel. The teachers were grouped according to areas of blindness or deafness and asked to identify the top 3 causes of learning lags related to the reading of their students. Most of the causes identified during the workshop correspond to those previously pointed out by Gabay during its monitoring visits and other field activities, which include the following:

Blindness:

- a) Online classes were not adequate, especially for learners who need physical braille reading material to practice their reading,
- b) Limited to No access to appropriate learning materials at home (braille, large print, technology),
- c) Teachers were not able to provide enough braille/tactile learning materials,
- d) Teachers do not have adequate training in teaching braille,
- e) Parents have difficulties in helping their children due to financial problems or time constraint, and
- f) Parents were not prepared or trained to teach reading.

Deafness:

- a) Many deaf children are deprived of sign language at home due to parental concerns,
- b) No or limited modules/references suited for these students,
- c) Teachers have concerns on the preparation of materials such as limited skills, manpower, and multi-tasking,
- d) Limited access to learning materials due to the distance of residence to schools, and environmental disturbances, and
- e) Unavailability of technology for learning like mobile phones, computers, and no stable internet connectivity.

It was interesting that problems with teachers' multi-tasking and limited skills (c) were not mentioned during the workshop. But these were replaced by the challenges of one receiving teacher who refused to accept children who are deaf in her class due to limited knowledge of sign language including the accommodation strategies.

Another noteworthy cause focuses on students having additional disabilities so they could not learn regular instruction and their excessive use of gadgets that limit their attention to their studies. It was briefly deliberated that teachers have important role in addressing challenges of students. With the belief and-understanding that every child can learn, teachers have the responsibility to adjust to children's learning style and pacing. These discussions paved the way for the next sessions that focus on topics that include equipping teachers to prepare lesson plans, incorporating accommodation and modification strategies into lessons' activities, and also prioritizing the development of the most essential learning competencies (MELCs) of DepEd and Gabay's modified Filipino Sign Language Curriculum.



The next workshop required each participant to list down the competencies taught to children who are blind, and deaf, for the school year 2019-2022 either from Gabay Modified FSL Curriculum/ Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs), or Additional Curriculum for the Blind). Participants were given meta cards and for each meta card, they should write one competency per grade level. Ten (10) minutes were given to complete the task and their answers were posted on a table for Competencies Taught According to Grade Level.



Based on the posted results from the teachers of the deaf, the visible focus for their children in Kindergarten to Grade 3 was the area on Receptive and Expressive Language, rather than Reading and Comprehension Skills, and Writing and Composition components. Under the area of Receptive and Expressive Language, the most common answers are competencies under the domains of i) Sign Language Basic Concepts and ii) Alphabet Knowledge. These were followed by iii) Fluency in Alphabet Signs & Common Words, iv) Sign Language Awareness (Phonology & Morphology) and Structure, and v) Vocabulary Development through Filipino Sign Language.

Table 14. List of Competencies commonly used by the Teacher Participants

Level	Area/Domain	Competencies
Non-Graded & K	Receptive & Expressive Language: Sign Language Basic Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses FSL for polite greetings and courteous expressions in appropriate situations, e.g. Good Morning/Afternoon, Thank You/You're Welcome, and Excuse Me/I'm Sorry. • Signs numbers from 1-10 or 1-20 • Matches the letter sign to its letter form • Expresses thoughts, feelings, and emotions
Non-Graded & K	Receptive & Expressive Language: Alphabet Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs in FSL the letters of the alphabet • Matches the letter names to its letter signs

Level	Area/Domain	Competencies
Non-Graded & K	Receptive & Expressive Language: Vocabulary Development through Filipino Sign Language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs in FSL common objects/pictures in the environment • Describe common objects through FSL based on color, shape and size
Non-Graded & K	Writing & Composition Spelling	Fingerspell words correctly on the child's names, age, and three-letter words.
Grade 1	Receptive & Expressive Language: Sign Language Basic Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses FSL in common expressions and polite greetings. • Signs in FSL the letters of the alphabet
Grade 1	Receptive & Expressive Language: Alphabet Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs in FSL the letters of the alphabet randomly and in order • Signs in FSL the beginning letter name of each picture
Grade 1	Receptive & Expressive Language: Vocabulary Development through Filipino Sign Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs in FSL vocabulary referring to people family and animals • Matches words with objects, pictures, and signs • Signs in FSL the meanings of words through picture clues.
Grade 1	Writing & Composition Spelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fingerspell grade level words correctly
Grade 2 & 3	Receptive & Expressive Language: Vocabulary Development through Filipino Sign Language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs FSL the expressions appropriate to the grade level to relate/show one's obligation, hope, and wish, • Identify synonyms and antonyms of adjectives through FSL.

For teachers of the blind, most of the competencies listed are at the Kinder level, and only one competency is identified for Grade 1. Competencies listed in Kinder include reading readiness skills such as i) understanding concepts about self, family, and the environment, ii) pre-braille skills such as identifying objects according to their physical qualities, and iii) braille letter identification. Competencies identified for the Grade 1 level include reading syllables (*katinig-patinig*, *patinig-katinig* combinations).

These identified competencies (for the blind and deaf) were used as the basis for the next activity which was a concurrent workshop where the participants prepared lesson plans and a mini-demonstration for the critical competencies not taught yet.

Deaf Breakout Session (Presentation of Outputs, Mini-Demo Lessons, and Feedbacking)

During the breakout workshop, all teachers of the deaf joined together. Dr. Quijano gave group names B, E, A, U, T, I, F, U and L” according to the letters of the word beautiful. Each group was provided with the learning objective/competence to be worked on not taught or indicated in the recently conducted Workshop 2.

As observed, the areas focused in the workshops were the least taught by the teachers which are the reading comprehension and study skills components. The competencies provided were identified from the MELCs by DepEd.

Each group was instructed to prepare a short Lesson Plan for:

- 2.1 Kinder - Domain: Language, Literacy, and Communication in FSL
- 2.2 Grades 1, 2, 3 – Subjects: FSL/Mother Tongue, Filipino, English
- 2.3 Use the template suggested by Gabay

Dr. Quijano provided tips on preparing the short LP such as using the multisensory approach (TVAK: tactile, visual, auditory, kinesthetic) that is most appropriate for deaf children to learn, using visual gestural communication or natural gestures, fingerspelling, and Filipino Sign Language, and using the suitable accommodation and modification strategies as shared to the participants in a handout.

The learning objective for each lesson was taken from the Gabay Filipino Sign Language Curriculum for the Deaf (Kindergarten to Grade III) as anchored in the Mother Tongue curriculum and the MELC. The format will follow the model Lesson Plan and Activity Sheet prepared by Gabay which has the following parts: i) Lesson Objective(s), ii) Materials Needed, iii) Procedures, and iv) Methods of Assessing Students’ Performance. The participants prepared the short lesson plans for three (3) hours. Six groups were chosen for the mini-demo of their lessons for 10 minutes each group with 5 minutes for feedbacking.



During the demonstrations, teachers veered away with the greetings and other preliminary activities. Instead, they directly did the motivation and activities for the development of the skill utilizing Filipino sign language.

After each demo, feedback was given by the groups who were assigned as Reactors, the Deaf Mentors, and Gabay consultants. The Deaf Mentors present were Mr. Justine Barcenas and Mr. Ron Daryl Quinio. Reactors provided important insights to improve the lesson activities.

Below are the common observations and comments raised after the demonstrations:

1. Teachers are naturally gifted with art skills in preparing materials for the students.
2. Only few teachers were observed to be competent in sign language and very engaging with students.
3. Some teachers lack visual-gestural communication (VGC) skill or any facial gestures during storytelling. They mostly forgot the inclusion of facial gestures, body movements, and home signs in addition to FSL to better engage the students.
4. Some groups had long sample stories which reactors thought to be appropriate for the higher grades rather than for deaf students in Grades 1 and 2.

5. There were errors on sign language committed by few teachers who admitted having they have limited knowledge on sign language.
6. Consultants encouraged teachers to unlock the meaning of the main words prior to presenting the stories.
7. Teachers paid minimal attention in motivating students to love the stories.

It was also recommended that this type of training will be conducted for GenEd teachers who conduct lessons with deaf student/s included in the regular classroom.

Blind Breakout Session (Presentation of Outputs, Mini-Demo Lessons, and Feedbacking)

The teachers for the blind were grouped into five (5) with three (3) members in each group. Each teacher was given a copy of the Additional Curriculum Content for Learners with Visual Impairment where the groups were tasked to i) choose one skill in Reading (Filipino or English, Kinder to Grade 3), ii) prepare a lesson plan based on the competency/skill chosen, and iii) prepare instructional materials for the lesson. While the participants were preparing for the demonstration, the consultant for Braille Reading, Mrs. Adelaida Elamparo, gave pointers and technical assistance to the teachers and showed samples of tactile materials that the teachers could use.

These materials were made from simple everyday objects and the teachers have realized that they can use such simple objects to teach their students braille reading.

During the actual demonstration per group, one participant acted as the teacher and the other two acted as the blind students. The teachers were surprised when the teachers who acted as pupils were “blindfolded.” The “blind pupils” encountered difficulties that made the lesson more challenging. The ones who acted as teachers did their best to achieve the skill to be developed in the lesson. The “blind pupils” were given different instructional materials that suit their abilities. Teachers with no formal training on how to teach reading to the blind tried their best to accomplish the skill in the lesson. The group observed the correct seating arrangement to better achieve their goal.

After the demonstration lessons, Mrs. Elamparo provided the following additional pointers and reminders to the teachers:

1. Make use of many senses in identifying objects.
2. Call each pupil by their name (don't just pat the shoulder), so that the others will know who is being called to recite.
3. Activity sheets should have a marker to identify the correct right side.



4. Grab every opportunity for incidental learning. Be sensitive to the questions of the learners. Avoid ignoring them.
5. Unlock difficult words.
6. Observe correct hand movement for fast-tracking and return sweep.
7. Don't hesitate in using the words – *tingnan* (see, look). As much as possible avoid using *kapain* and *hawakan* except in cases when it is really needed.
8. Ask questions one at a time, especially for beginners.
9. When pupils are asked to perform actions, be sure that they are at the correct distances from one another to avoid accidents.
10. Use tactile materials instead of visual materials. If tactile materials are not available, especially for pictures and videos, describe each so that the learner has ideas of the materials.
11. For beginners, avoid using very long stories and poems to sustain their interest.
12. Decoding and reading should precede writing.

13. All instructional materials should be within arm's length of the teacher to avoid much movement.
14. For low-vision learners, avoid using very "BIG" instructional materials. It will take some time before the learner would identify the material.
15. Concentrate on teaching the learners than the observers to avoid nervousness - resulting in skipping important activities.

Wrap-up of the lessons learned following the demonstrations facilitated by the consultants, Dr. Mirla Olores and Mrs. Adelaida Elamparo was held in the plenary session.

Divisions of Sorsogon City and Sorsogon

The same *"Face-to-Face Training of Teachers for Enhancing Reading Experiences of Children with Sensorial Disabilities"* was conducted for the Divisions of Sorsogon City and Sorsogon for two days on January 28-29, 2023. From the one day training for teachers of Batangas City and Batangas, an overwhelming number of these teachers recommended that it should at least be held in two days to allow them time in the practicum to engage in sharing of ideas to improve the reading performance of learners with sensorial disabilities. With the same objectives, the activities for this training were slightly different from those previously discussed.



Table 15. Number of GenEd and SPED Teachers who participated in the Training of Teachers for Enhancing Reading Experiences of Children with Sensorial Disabilities in Sorsogon City and Sorsogon

Division	GenEd			SPED			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Sorsogon City	1	21	22		5	5	1	26	27
Sorsogon		13	13	2	15	17	2	28	30
Total	1	34	35	2	20	22	3	54	57

The training was participated by fifty-seven (57) teachers. There were 35 (61.40%) GenEd Teachers and 22 (38.60%) SPED Teachers. Of the total number of participants, 27 (47.37%) were males and 30 (52.63%) females.

Table 16. Number of School Heads who participated in the Training of Teachers for Enhancing Reading Experiences of Children with Sensorial Disabilities in Sorsogon City and Sorsogon

Division	School Head		
	Male	Female	Total
Sorsogon City	0	0	0
Sorsogon	1	2	3
Total	1	2	3

There were three (3) School Heads from Division of Sorsogon who participated in the activity. There was 1 male (33.33%) and 2 females (66.67%).

On the first day, the program started with the brief acknowledgement of all participants. They were asked to introduced their names, school, and number of children with disabilities handled. This was followed by explaining to participants the objectives, mechanics of the training, and also overview of Gabay project for the new participants. DepEd RO V Education Program Supervisor, Dr. Elisa Suarez gave an opening message to the participants highlighting the opportunities that Gabay is giving to improve their craft as teachers and educators.

The first plenary session was facilitated by Gabay COP, Dr. Yolanda Quijano with the topic, “*Gabay Teachers in the Inclusion Program for Children with Sensorial Disabilities*”. Dr. Quijano introduced the key principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Inclusive Education (IE).

She emphasized the “why” of UDL, the “what” or concepts related to UDL, and the “how” or its application and uses in the classroom. She presented videos to support the principles of UDL and also co-teaching/collaboration of SPED and general education teachers for the models of inclusion. During the session, teachers shared what they understand about UDL and the applicability to their schools. The next session, *“Identification of the Causes of Learning Lags Related to Reading”* was facilitated by Gabay staff, Ms. Maui Gabriel and Ms. Joy Magsubar. Each group discussed and identified the top 3 Causes of Learning Lags Related to Reading. Teachers grouped their meta cards with the same causes identified by Gabay in the previous assessments through questionnaires and interviews. The result of the workshop showed that the factors causing the learning lags among blind learners are: i) difficulty of parents to assist at home; ii) limited to no access of appropriate learning materials at home either in braille or large print format; iii) lack of knowledge for producing learning resource materials for the blind; iv) need for regular face-to-face interactions of the learners in classrooms; and v) teachers do not have proper training in handling blind learners. While for the Deaf learners, the following factors were identified: i) parental concerns specifically non-supportive family members and language barriers at home because of the lack of skills to communicate through sign language; ii) technological concerns like some deaf children had no discipline in using the gadgets, or in contrast that no gadgets are available at home, and no signal in the area where the teacher can give updates to students; iii) limited modules or references suited to the learners; and iv) concerns on materials preparations due to limited skills, manpower and multitasking.

The next session was the topic on *“Listing down of Competencies taught to the blind and deaf children in SY 2019-2020 to present”*. The participants were asked to work individually. There were separate sheets for the type of disability: blindness and deafness to gather the competencies taught (either from the Gabay Modified FSL Curriculum/ Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs), Additional Curriculum for the Blind).

Among the teachers of the deaf, 28 teachers shared what the common MELCs they taught to their learners. Here are the answers of Kindergarten teachers:

1. Signs in FSL letters on the alphabet. (3 teacher)
2. Signs number 1-10. (3 teacher)
3. Describes common objects/things/pictures in the environment through FSL. (3 teacher)
4. Matches the letter sign to its letter form. (2 teacher)

5. Expresses polite greetings & courteous expression in appropriate situations. (1 teacher)
6. Expresses thoughts, feelings, emotions, sadness, fear, anger through FSL. (1 teacher)

There were six (6) Grade 1 teachers who posted the following MELCs:

1. Signs in FSL letters of the alphabet randomly (3 teachers)
2. Signs the beginning letter of the name of each picture (1 teacher)
3. Identifies action words in signed and written exercise (1 teacher)
4. Uses in describing words in sentences using FSL (1 teacher)

There were four (4) teachers in Grade 2 who provided their MELCs utilized:

1. Uses naming words in sentences through FSL (2 teachers)
2. Gives the summary of a story using pictures, role play, and FSL (1 teacher)
3. Identifies the gender of naming words, when applicable through FSL (1 teacher)

While Grade 3 teachers shared four (4) MELCs that they used:

1. Fingerspells correctly the words in the list of vocabulary words in the selection read (2 teachers)
2. Interpreters a pictograph based on a legend through FSL (1 teacher)
3. Notes important details in grade level narrative texts (1 teacher)
4. Uses correctly prepositions and prepositional phrases through FSL (1 teacher)

The teachers of the blind also shared what are the MELCs they commonly used to their children:

1. Kindergarten
 - Natutukoy ang mga magkakatulad/magkakaibang bagay (1 teacher)
 - Ang bata ay nagkakaroon ng pag-unawa sa konsepto ng pamilya, paaralan at komunidad (2 teachers)
 - Natutuloy kung sinu-sino ang bumubuo ng pamilya (1 teacher)
 - Naipamalas ang kakayahang kontrolin ang sariling damdamin at pag uugali, gumawa ng desisyon at magtagumpay sa kanyang mga gawain: Nakikilala ang sarili (2 teachers)
 - Ang bata ay nagkakaroon ng pang-unawa sa kaugnayan ng tunog sa titik. Naiugnay ang bawat tunog sa titik na kumakatawan nito. (1 teacher)

2. Grade 1

- Nakakasulat ng mga pangalan ng tao, lugar, hayop, bagay at pangyayari
- Nakakabasa ng mga oantig sa kombinasyong: katinig-patinig; patinig-katinig; katinig-patinig-katinig
- Nakababasa ng mga salita gamit ang braille sa kombinasyong katinig-patinig; patinig-katinig; katinig-patinig-katinig

3. Grade 2

- Nakababasa ng mga pantig sa kombinasyong katinig-patinig
- Nakababasa ng mga pantig sa kombinasyong: katinig-patinig-katinig

4. Grade 3

- Nakababasa ng mga pantig sa kombinasyong: katinig-patinig
- Nasasabi ang nakuhang kaalaman sa binasang teksto
- Nasasabi ang kaisipang nakapaloob sa tesktong binasa
- Naibabahagi ang karanasan sa pagbasa upang nakapaghikayat ng iba para pagkaroon ng pagkahilig sa pagbasa

Dr. Mirla Olores, Gabay Consultant discussed the topic, *“Accommodations and Modifications for Children with Sensorial Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms”*. She expounded the differences of accommodations and modifications. Dr. Olores presented the video for accommodations and modifications. She also introduced terms on the types of accommodations and modifications, provided definitions and examples. Each group was assigned to specific number of items and they had to indicate what type of accommodations and modifications are these examples.



For the last topic during the day, teachers were requested to get ready with the materials since all the topics learned prior to this session would be applied in *“Preparing Lessons & Mini-Demo for the Priority Competencies not taught for the Blind and Deaf Students”*. In the planning preparation, the participants were grouped by 5-6 teachers and

each group chose the learning objective/competence to be worked on by drawing lots. Each group prepared a short Lesson Plan for:

- Kinder - Domain: Language, Literacy and Communication in FSL
- Grades 1, 2, 3 Subjects: FSL/Mother Tongue, Filipino, English

They were advised to use the template which was provided to each group. Gabay provided the following tips in preparing the LP.

- Use the multisensory approach (TVAK: tactile, visual, auditory, kinesthetic) considering the use of the senses that are most appropriate for the deaf children to learn,
- Use visual gestural communication or natural gestures, fingerspelling and Filipino Sign Language, and
- Use the suitable accommodation and modification strategies as discussed.

The Consultants and Supervisors roamed around to assist the groups on the assigned MELCs and the lesson plan they developed.

On the second day, the participants had Mini-Demo of the Lesson Plans. The group was divided into two, separating teachers handling deaf learners from teachers handling the blind. Each group was given 20 minutes to demonstrate their lesson, and feedbacking for about 10 minutes. The group designated the teacher while the other members acted as the deaf/ blind learners. Deaf learners put on ear plugs during the lessons while blind learners were blindfolded. After the demo, feedback was given by the Gabay consultants, Deaf mentors, supervisors and administrators, the assigned groups and other participants and Gabay staff. All Lesson Plans



were submitted to Gabay for review and will be emailed back to the teachers who prepared these.

Gabay then informed the teachers about the additional Learning Resource Materials (LRMs) which is the Regional Variation of Filipino Sign Language Stories.

This will provide teachers varied learning resource materials to improve reading comprehension of the deaf learners, and to influence the teachers in utilizing Visual Gestural Communication as a part of FSL component. Gabay will also be providing braille, tactile materials and stories for blind children. These come in a Storybook for the classmates or peers of blind children that promotes friendship between a child with and without disability.

Divisions of Maasin City and Southern Leyte

For the Divisions of Maasin City and Southern Leyte, the training conducted on February 18-19, 2023 was modified to accommodate the needs of the GenEd teachers in the inclusion program who for the first time have attended Gabay training. There were two groups: the experienced SPED and GenEd teachers for the blind and deaf learners who were already familiar with Gabay project and had been attending Gabay trainings previously, and the other group was composed of new GenEd teachers and their respective administrators. These new teachers were recommended by the Division Supervisors In-Charge of SPED from both divisions and are also offshoot of the visits conducted last February 8-10, 2023 by Gabay staff.



The main goal of this training was for both the experienced and new teachers to increase their awareness, knowledge, and skills related to instructional interventions for school-age students who are blind and deaf. This also aimed for the experienced teachers to demonstrate strategies in addressing learning lags in building up emergent literacy/reading readiness, reading comprehension and writing skills among blind and deaf learners.

Table 17: Number of GenEd and SPED Teachers who participated in the Training of Teachers for Enhancing Reading Experiences of Children with Sensorial Disabilities in Maasin City and Southern Leyte

Division	GenEd			SPED			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Maasin City		19	19	1	5	6	1	24	25
Southern Leyte	1	36	37	1	11	12	2	47	49
Total	1	55	56	2	16	18	3	71	74

The training was participated by seventy-four (74) teachers. There were 56 (75.68%) GenEd Teachers and 18 (24.32%) SPED Teachers. Of the total number of participants, 25 (33.78%) were males and 49 (66.22%) females.

Table 18. Number of School Heads who participated in the Training of Teachers for Enhancing Reading Experiences of Children with Sensorial Disabilities in Maasin City and Southern Leyte

Division	School Head		
	Male	Female	Total
Maasin City			
Southern Leyte	4	5	9
Total	4	5	9

There were 9 School Heads from Division of Sorsogon who participated in the activity. There were 4 males (44.44%) and 5 females (55.56%).

The participants were also joined by the two (2) Education Program Supervisors in-charge of SPED.



On the first day, all new and experienced teachers were mixed together in the plenary for the 30-minute opening ceremony. Dr. Genis Murallos, the Schools Division Superintendent of Southern Leyte gave an opening message.

This was followed by explaining to the participants the objectives, mechanics of the training, and also the overview of the Gabay project for the new participants.

After providing the training mechanics, breakout sessions were done, separating the experienced teachers from the new teachers.

Break-out Session for New Teachers

The first topic was on the “Rights of Children and Legal Mandates” which was facilitated by Education Consultant, Dr. Mirla Olores. Teacher-participants were introduced to the fundamental concepts that Inclusive Education is anchored within children’s basic rights. Dr. Olores emphasized on what author Berthold Lowenfield said that *“Education must aim at giving the child with special needs a knowledge of the realities around him, the confidence to cope with these realities, and the feeling that he is recognized and accepted as an individual in his own right.”* She emphasized to the teachers the basic principles underlying inclusive education for children with special educational needs. She quoted the statement of Mother Theresa that *“Human rights are not privileges conferred by government. They are every human being’s entitlement by virtue of his humanity.”* Teachers, especially those who do not have any experiences in special needs education were inspired to accept the challenge in receiving children with disabilities.

The second topic *“Understanding Children who are Blind”* was discussed by Ms. Cyril Bergado, Cum Laude, Blind, fresh graduate of Cebu Normal University for the Bachelor of Special Needs Education (Generalist Special Needs). This session gave teachers understanding on basic courtesy rules in handling /



dealing with persons / children who are blind. After which, a session was facilitated by Deaf Mentor, Mr. Justine Barcenas for teachers to understand the Deaf culture along with some misconceptions about sensorial disabilities.

Teachers were inspired to hear from blind and deaf persons themselves and were very interested on learning how to communicate using Braille and Filipino Sign Language. Having professionals with disability as resource speakers added to the teachers’ interest and realization that persons with disabilities are able, given the proper accommodation and quality education by educators like them.

The next topic was on “Impact of Sensorial Disability” which was deliberated on by Ms. Amy Mojica, Gabay Deputy Chief of Party. She explained the impact of sensorial disability to a child and gave pointers as to how teachers should collaborate with parents and stakeholders in the community.

In the afternoon, the first session was the “Introduction to Braille Reading and Writing” which was facilitated by Ms. Maui Gabriel and Ms. Cyril Bergado. The participants were given an introduction to Braille reading which includes the braille alphabet and their positioning in the braille cell. After each set of letters was discussed, various braille transcribing exercises were also provided to the participants. This activity was very much appreciated by the participants and they expressed that they hope to be able to use this new knowledge with their future students. The next part of the session was braille writing using slate and a stylus which was also enjoyed by them where the final output was to write their full names in braille.



A session on Basic Filipino Sign Language was facilitated by Deaf Mentors, Mr. Justine Barcenas, Mr. Floyd Basco and Mr. Heron Osco. For the whole session, the participants had fun learning Visual Gestural Communication (VGC) and Filipino Sign Language (FSL) alphabet, numbers, and basic greetings. Teachers who are new in Special Needs Education realized how challenging the task is but possible for all GenEd teachers.



Through the last two sessions, participants became familiar on how they can communicate with blind or deaf students in inclusion classes. In this way, educators whether in regular or special classes, gained knowledge and awareness towards providing and strengthening inclusive education among children with sensorial disabilities.

Break-out Session for Experienced Teachers

The first break out session for these teachers was facilitated by Gabay COP, Dr. Yolanda Quijano with the topic, “*Gabay Teachers in the Inclusion Program for Children with Sensorial Disabilities*”. Dr. Quijano introduced the key principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Inclusive Education (IE). She emphasized the “why, what, and how of UDL”: the concepts related to UDL, and how should UDL be applied and used in the classroom. She presented videos to support the principles of UDL and also co-teaching/collaboration of SPED and GenEd teachers for the models of inclusion. During the session, teachers shared what they understand about UDL and the applicability to their schools. Many of the teachers commented in the evaluation that they’ve learned a lot from this session and support-work for its implementation in their schools.

The next session, “*Identification of the Causes of Learning Lags Related to Reading*” was facilitated by Gabay staff, Ms. Maui Gabriel and Ms. Joy Magsubar. Each group discussed and identified the top 3 Causes of Learning Lags Related to Reading. There were two (2) groups for the teachers of blind and low vision. There were eight (8) meta cards posted on the factors causing learning lags of the blind



learners: i) difficulty of parents to assist learning at home; ii) limited to no access to appropriate learning materials at home either in braille or large print format; iii) lack of knowledge for producing learning resource materials for the blind iv)the need for regular face-to-face interactions of the learners in classrooms; and v) parental concerns such as absenteeism due to economic status of the family, lack of training, follow-up and discipline of children by parents.

On the other hand, there were three (3) groups of the teachers of the deaf. Majority of the children concerns were about absenteeism, emotional trauma, nutrition issue, lack of attention and motivation, lack of retention, and with additional disabilities manifestations. There were five (5) comments on parental concerns specifically of non-supportive family members, language barriers at home because of the lack of skills to communicate through sign language, and economic status of the family. Another factor raised was about technological concerns. Teachers said some deaf children had no discipline in using the gadgets, or in contrast that no available gadgets at home, and no signal where the teacher can give updates to students. There was one (1) group who admitted on the limited modules or references suited for the deaf learners. Lastly, two (2) groups of teachers had concerns on materials preparations due to limited skills, manpower, and multitasking.

The next session focused on *“Listing down of Competencies taught to the blind and deaf children in SY 2019-2020 to present”*. Among the teachers of the deaf, 15 teachers posted the following MELCs they taught to their learners.

1. 2 Kinder Teachers - “Signs in FSL letters of the alphabet”
2. 1 Kinder teacher- “Signs number 1-10”
3. 1 Kinder teacher – “Uses beginning FSL skills to communicate personal experiences, ideas, feelings in different contexts
4. 1 Kinder teacher- “Identifies letter signs pf FSL alphabet and matches letter signs to words”
5. 3 kinder teachers- “Introduces oneself in FSL”

There were two Grade 1 teachers who posted the following MELCs:

1. Signs words in FSL correctly for different purposes and contents
2. Matches words with objects, pictures and signs

There were two (2) teachers in the Grade 2 who cited the MELCs utilized:

1. Matches words with objects, pictures and signs
2. Identifies and uses action words in simple terms with the help of the signal through FSL

While Grade 3 teachers shared two MELCs that they used:

1. Identifies adjectives appropriate for the grade level through FSL
2. Recognizes common abbreviations

The teachers of the blind also shared what are the MELCs they commonly used:

1. Kindergarten

- Recognition of the braille alphabet
- Natutuloy kung sinu-sino ang bumubuo ng pamilya (1 teacher)
- Nakikilala ang mga titik ayon sa ayos ng braille dots at naabibigkas ang tunog ng mga ito.
- Nakasusulat ng wasto sa braille ang mga titik ng alpabeto

2. Grade 1

- Nakakabasa ng mga pantig sa kombinasyong: katinig-patinig; patinig-katinig; katinig-patinig-katinig

3. Grade 2

- Nakapagsasabi ng mga paboritong pagkain, laruan gamit ang mga pantig sa kombinasyong: katinig-patinig-katinig

4. Grade 3

- Nakababasa ng mga pantig sa kombinasyong: katinig-patinig; patinig-katinig

In the afternoon, Dr. Quijano discussed the topic, *“Accommodations and Modifications for Children with Sensorial Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms”*. Dr. Quijano asked the teachers on their knowledge about accommodation and modifications.

She explained the differences between the two. For the workshop mechanics, they were grouped according to where participants were seated by table, separating the teachers for the deaf and the blind. Each group was assigned to specific number of items and indicate what type of accommodation or modification is cited in each example. Each group studied the assigned items (examples) for Accommodations and Modifications. They needed to determine *if Appropriate for CSDs they were handling and what type of Accommodation/Modification* is shown. There was an answer sheet given per group. The group reporter assigned presented the output. The participants and Gabay staff gave their feedbacks.



Groups of the blind and deaf working on the same items or examples compared their answers and indeed there were differences in handling deaf and blind learners. These show the unique needs of the learners. Some groups have different answers for the same item, therefore they might apply different accommodation or modification depending on the needs of the learners.

Before the 1st day ended, teachers were requested to get ready with the materials since all the topics learned prior to this session will be applied in *“Preparing Lessons & Mini-Demo for the Priority Competencies not taught for the Blind and Deaf Students”*. In the planning preparation, the participants were grouped by 5-6 teachers and each group chose the learning objective/competence to be worked on by drawing lots. Each group prepared a short Lesson Plan for:

- Kinder - Domain: Language, Literacy and Communication in FSL
- Grades 1, 2, 3 Subjects: FSL/Mother Tongue, Filipino, English

They were advised to use the template which was provided to each group. Gabay provided the following tips in preparing the LP.

- Use the multisensory approach (TVAK: tactile, visual, auditory, kinesthetic) considering the use of the senses that are most appropriate for the deaf children to learn;
- Use visual gestural communication or natural gestures, fingerspelling and Filipino Sign Language; and
- Use the suitable accommodation and modification strategies as discussed.

Groups of experienced teachers discuss on the assigned MELCs and the lesson plan they will develop.

On the second day, the first session after morning preliminaries was the Mini-Demo of the Lesson Plans for all participants. The experienced teachers did mini-demo lessons for teaching the blind and for teaching deaf learners. The teachers in the new group observed and provided comments or feedbacks. The school heads and education program supervisors provided their reactions too, along with Gabay staff. Each group was given 20 minutes to demonstrate their lesson, and feedbacking for about 10 minutes. After the demo, feedback was given by the Gabay consultants, Deaf mentors, supervisors and administrators, the assigned groups and other participants and Gabay staff.



All Lesson Plans were submitted to Gabay for review and will be emailed back to the teachers who prepared these. To wrap-up the Demo Lessons, Dr. Mirla Olores and Ms. Amy Mojica provided summary of the days' activities.

Dr. Olores and Ms. Mojica both emphasized the collaboration of the GenEd and SPED, the new and experienced teachers.

They shared these important ideas: Nothing can be too difficult if you were driven by the heart, passion, and belief for each learner that he/she can learn. Adapting many ways, options and patience are the most powerful ingredients in dealing with these types of learners. Ask, search, collaborate, assess, and discuss with parents' step by step. If many activities can be challenging to a child, focus on one skill at a time. It's OK to ask for support from your co-teacher, parent, school head and other specialists when teaching new skills to children who are deaf or blind.



For the last session, Gabay then informed the teachers about the additional Learning Resource Materials (LRMs) which is the Regional Variations of Filipino Sign Language Stories, braille modules, tactile materials and stories for blind children.

B.4 Training of Parents on Supporting Children with Sensorial Disabilities

Sorsogon City and Sorsogon Province

In all Gabay desired results such as increased identification, referral, enrolment and government attention to services and programs of children with sensorial disabilities, parents' involvement is very crucial. Gabay always believes that one of the most effective means of ensuring academic success for children with sensorial disabilities is to engage families in their children's education. Those with disabilities require a greater degree of parental involvement and advocacy than their peers to assure they will be receiving the needed level of instructions. Further, School-To-School International (STS) that led, facilitated and analyzed the midterm evaluation of Gabay's interventions for the deaf learners also recommended face-to-face training for the Parents and Caregivers (PCGs) as technology-reliant trainings have multiple obstacles and challenging for them.

Since 2020, Gabay has already conducted six (6) Parents' Training across the project sites through Zoom or hybrid approach. Over 400 Parents have participated in various capacity building activities initiated by Gabay, such as Introductory Filipino Sign Language (FSL) Training, FSL Mentoring for Parents of Deaf Children, Learning Educational and Resource Network (LEARN) Training, Skills Training for Teachers & Parents of children with multiple disabilities and deafblind, and Parents Training on Supporting Children with Sensorial Disabilities.

For this quarter, Gabay has successfully conducted further Trainings of Parents from Sorsogon City and Sorsogon Province and Batangas City and Batangas Province on Supporting Children with Sensorial Disabilities. These activities aimed to support educators in working effectively with parents to improve the education of children who are blind and low vision, deaf and hard-of-hearing, and deafblind at home.

These trainings also i) espoused parents’ engagement in the education of their children towards effective parents-schools’ partnerships and productive working relationships; ii) helped the parents/families understand and exercise their roles in the education intervention for their children with sensorial disabilities; and iii) promoted the families as advocates on the rights of their children with sensorial disabilities.

Training of Parents from Sorsogon City and Sorsogon Province on Supporting Children with Sensorial Disabilities

The training was held on October 17-19, 2022 at Villa Isabel Hotel and Resort, Sorsogon City. There were fifty-two (52) parents and guardian who participated in the training, 36 (69.23%) were from the Sorsogon City and 16 (30.77%) from Sorsogon Province.

Table 19. Participants during the Parents Training in Sorsogon City and Sorsogon Province

Divisions	Parents of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing			Parents of the Blind/Low Vision			Parents of Multiple Disabilities w/ VI			Total		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	T
Sorsogon City		7	7		8	8		1	1	0	16	16
Sorsogon	2	22	24		8	8		4	4	2	34	36
Total	2	29	31	0	16	16	0	5	5	2	50	52

It can be gleaned from the table above that the highest group was composed of 31 (59.61%) parents of the deaf and hard of hearing. This is followed by the parents of the blind and low vision who comprised 16 (30.77%) of the total number. These parents were also joined in by 5 (9.61%) parents with children having other disabilities with visual impairments.

Of the total number of participants, only two (2 or 3.84%) were males and 50 (96.15%) were females. The record shows that the training is generally participated by females.

Most of the parents who attended were having kids newly enrolled in the schools. A total of 16 schools sent and assisted these parents to attend the training.

Among these 16 schools that Gabay has served for more than three years, there were two additional new schools, namely, Peñafrancia Elementary School and Basud Elementary School. These two schools are under the Division of Sorsogon City.

Gabay has been promoting early intervention for children with sensorial disabilities. During coordination, Gabay requested schools to encourage parents of the new enrollees to participate in trainings. Gabay also contacted parents of children identified with hearing and vision problems during the screening to participate. With these, many of the parents have children of primary school age. The children's ages range from 5 to 17 years. Of the total, the highest number is 9 or 17.3% children with 13 years of age, while children who are 7 and 8 years old have a total of 8 or 15.38% for each age level. This is followed by children, ages 9 and 12, each with 5 or 9.61%. Children ages 5, 6, and 10 have the same population with 4 or 7.7%. Children with age 11 are 2 or 3.84% while children ages 14 and 16-17, have 1 or 1.92% and 2 or 3.84% respectively.

Highlights

The activity was the first Gabay face-to-face training with a large group of participants after pandemic. There were plenary sessions combining parents of the deaf, blind, deafblind and multiple disabilities. Break-out sessions were also done by dividing parents of the deaf and parents of the blind/low vision.

There was a pretest given to parents prior to the training sessions. The contents of the sessions were taken and modified from Gabay modules like: Educating Children with Sensorial Disabilities (PLM5); Disability Sensitivity Awareness (PLM5); Introductory to FSL Course (CSB), and RBI training modules.

On the first day, Dr. Elisa Suarez, DepEd Region 5 Education Program Supervisor gave the opening message. A video of a special number performed by blind and deaf learners was shown to give gratitude and appreciation to all parents and guardians who have raised them. This was followed by the overview of the project for parents' awareness and the objectives of the training by the Gabay COP, Dr. Yolanda Quijano.

After the brief opening program, the topic on *“Understanding Persons with Disabilities”* was discussed by a Professional Blind, Ms. Camille Nagutom who comes from Irosin, Sorsogon, and Mr. Justine Barcenas, who shared their personal testimonies and courtesy rules of blindness and culture of the deaf, respectively. They clarified different misconceptions about blindness and deafness. They discussed how a person can help when encountering deaf and blind persons, their interests and concepts/ideas that are often misinterpreted by hearing and sighted persons.

Their points/clues have helped the parents understand their children and relate to the many example stories that the two professionals shared. Ms. Camille and Mr. Justine also shared their journey with their families when they were young and discussed with pride how their parents supported them.

It was followed by the discussion on the legal basis on the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs) particularly, children with sensorial disabilities by Mr. Jonathan Alicando, one of the Focal Persons of the Disability Sector in the province of Sorsogon.



The topic on *“ How to Raise A Child with Sensorial Disabilities”* which was discussed by two (2) parents of a Deaf Professional, Mrs. Gina Emata and parent of a Blind Senior High School, Mrs. Marites Tinay. They shared experiences on the different challenging steps they took in raising their kids, and the success and failures they encountered. This was a heartwarming and tearful topic for most parents and guardians, but they were motivated seeing that they were not the only parents experiencing the struggle.

The last topic was about the “*Understanding the Special and Inclusion Education Process*” which was deliberated on by Dr. Yolanda Quijano after videos were seen by the parents. The parents were able to differentiate what is special and inclusive education for children who are deaf, blind and low vision and implications of such arrangement to them. She further extracted from parents the first process that is usually done by educators along with families prior to providing the instruction. This is assessment which is identifying the child’s strengths and weaknesses related to the developmental areas.

This activity was performed through a workshop which engaged parents in making the assessment map showing the strengths and weaknesses of a child.



On the second day, break-out sessions were done, dividing parents of the deaf from parents of the blind and low vision.

The parents of the deaf focused on the topic “*Introduction to Filipino Sign Language (FSL), Visual Gestural Communication*” which was facilitated by Mr. Justine Barcenas with Mr. Omar Emata and Mr. Ryan Clint Marcaida who serve as Deaf Mentors in the Divisions of Sorsogon City and Sorsogon. They taught parents on the basic Filipino Sign Language alphabet, basic numbers and signs of the common words found at home and in the school.



The group for the parents of the deaf and hard of hearing had games and activities without voicing. Parents were given situations and thought on how they would reenact the scenarios. Image below shows a parent acting out the deaf experiences on getting important documents like cedula and etc. where oftentimes they will be asked to stand-by and will be called later. Parents were using both visual gestural communications and sign language as communication mode.



The other parents of the blind and low vision were discussing Braille Reading and Writing, and Assistive Devices to support their children at home. This was facilitated by Ms. Camille Nagutom with the former RBI Preschool teacher and current Gabay Field Coordinator, Ms. Maricar Gabriel.



The last session for the day was on the topic “*Nurturing Your Child’s Self-Esteem*” facilitated by Ms. Amy Mojica. The session focused on developing social and emotional skills through home and school involvement. Parents were encouraged to share their ideas on acceptance of their children’s disability and involvement for the education of their children. They created dream maps and shared how they can better help their children to attain inclusion in their neighborhood and community.



On the last day, there were discussions on “*School Collaboration and Teacher Partnership*” which was tackled by Ms. Josa Haboc, Special Education Teacher and also SPED Coordinator of Sorsogon City East Central School. She had experiences leading the SPED teachers in catering to different types of disabilities and in working with parents. The topic encouraged parents to have smooth, active and good relationships with schools and teachers for the skills improvement of the learners. Teacher Josa also explained the benefit of the partnerships. She took note and was appreciative of parents who did their best to support their children and encouraged them to spend more time with them in reviewing lessons given by the teachers. She emphasized that the partnership will create more opportunities for the learners to continually learn and grow.



The last topic includes “*Parents are Their Child’s Best Advocate!*” discussing the importance and different ways that the parents can advocate for the welfare of their children. The session was facilitated by Mr. Salvador Carranza, Social Welfare Assistant of the Provincial Social Welfare Development Office (PSWDO) who is a PWD himself having cerebral palsy and orthopedic impairment. He was assisted by a Gabay staff during the session.

Mr. Carranza encouraged the parents to reach out to the LGU municipalities particularly the Municipal Social Welfare Development Office (MSWDO) to inquire about the programs and services for the interventions of their children. They were also told to discuss among themselves - parents, and join activities which would enhance their involvement with their children and would also bring good impact on the self- confidence of their children.

In the afternoon, the parents were asked to answer the post-test and fill-out the evaluation form. Gabay also tackled the questions parked and other concerns on the educational needs of their children.



During the closing program, the parents were asked to give impressions for the 3-day training. The parents were glad to have attended the training - meet other parents, enhance their skills, supplement their understanding and plan for their child's welfare.

Batangas City and Batangas Province

The training was held on November 14-16, 2022 at Days Hotel, Batangas City. There were forty-five (45) parents and guardian who participated in the training, 37 (82.22%) were from the Division of Batangas, six (6) (13.33%) from the Division of Batangas City, and two (2) (4.44%) from the Division of Sto. Tomas City.

Table 20. Participants during the Training of Parents from Batangas City and Batangas Province

Divisions	Parents of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing			Parents of the Blind/Low Vision			Parents of Multiple Disabilities w/ VI			Total		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	T
Batangas	5	17	22	3	11	14		1	1	8	29	37
Batangas City	0	4	4	1	1	2				1	5	6
Sto. Tomas City	0	2	2								2	2
Total	5	23	28	4	12	16	0	1	1	9	36	45

It can be gleaned from the table above that the highest group was composed of 28 (62.22%) parents of the deaf and hard of hearing. This was followed by the parents of the blind and low vision who comprised six (6 or 13.33%). This training was also joined by one (1 or 2.22%) parent of a child having other disabilities with visual impairment. Of the total number of participants, only nine (9) or 20% were males and 36 or 80% were females.

Most of the parents who attended were having kids newly enrolled in the schools. A total of 19 schools sent and assisted these parents to attend the training. Among these 19 schools that Gabay served for more than three years, there were four (4) additional new schools, namely: Bugaan Integrated School, Pinagbayan Elementary School, Sto. Domingo Elementary School, and Venancio Trinidad Sr. Memorial School. The first two schools are under the Division of Batangas while the last two schools are from the Division of Batangas City.

A total of four (4) children with blindness of these parents were referred to schools for enrolment: two (2) in Mabini Central School and two (2) in Taysan Central School.

Highlights

The activity was the first Gabay activity conducted via face-to-face with a large group of participants after pandemic in Batangas. Same with Sorsogon Parents Training, there were plenary sessions combining parents of the deaf, blind and deaf blind and multiple disabilities. Break-out sessions were also done by dividing the parents of children with deafness and blindness/low vision.

During the training, there was a pretest distributed prior to the sessions. The contents of the sessions were taken and modified from the modules of Gabay such as: Educating Children with Sensorial Disabilities (PLM5); Disability Sensitivity Awareness (PLM5); Introductory to FSL Course (CSB), and RBI training modules.

On the first day, Dr. Rosalina Panganiban, DepEd Division of Batangas City, Supervisor-In-Charge of SPED gave the opening message. A video of a special number performed by blind and deaf learners was shown to give gratitude and appreciation to all parents and guardians who have

raised them. This was followed by the overview of the project for parents' awareness and the objectives of the training by the Gabay COP, Dr. Yolanda Quijano.

After the brief opening program, the topic on *“Understanding your Child who is Deaf and Blind”* was discussed by the Deaf Mentor, Mr. Justine Barcenas, and a Blind Pastor, Ptr. Jayrick Dubria who shared their personal testimonies and imparted about the culture of the deaf and courtesy rules of blindness, respectively. They clarified different misconceptions about deafness and blindness as well as how a person could help when encountering deaf and blind persons, their interests and concepts/ideas that are often misinterpreted by hearing and sighted persons.



Their points/clues have helped the parents understand their children and relate to the many example stories that the two professionals shared. Some parents were given the chance to share their own experiences with their blind and/or deaf children.



The topic on *“Raising a Child who is deaf/blind: A Parent’s Perspective”* was discussed by one parent of a Blind who has a daughter pursuing a college degree in Education, Mrs. Roda Sayos and another parent of a Deaf Graduate of De La Salle College of St. Benilde who is preparing for the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET), Mrs. Genebelle Mendoza.

They shared experiences on the different challenging steps they took in raising their kids, and the success and failures they encountered in bringing them up.



The next topic focused on the “Rights of Children with Disabilities” discussed by the Batangas Focal Person and a strong blind advocate, Mr. Ronnel Del Rio who emphasized the different rights and legal bases of CSDs. Being a parent himself, he encouraged parents on the importance of their roles as first teacher of their children with the family at home.



The last topic was a workshop on “Understanding the Special and Inclusion Education Process” which was facilitated by Dr. Yolanda Quijano. She described what is special and inclusive education for children who are deaf, blind and low vision and implications to parents. She further included identifying the child’s strengths and weaknesses related to learning where she explained to parents what the children can do and their basic needs for learning



The second day started with words of encouragement from Ptr. Jayrick Dubria. The second day sessions were mainly conducted in break-out groups, dividing parents of the deaf from parents of the blind and low vision.

The parents of the deaf focused on the topic “*Introduction to Filipino Sign Language (FSL), Visual Gestural Communication*” which was facilitated by Gabay Deaf Mentor in Batangas, Mr. Ron Daryl Quinio and Mr. Justine Barcenas. They taught parents on the basic Filipino Sign Language alphabet, basic numbers and signs of the common words found at home and in the school through fun games applying their learnings. Parents were using visual gestural communications and sign language combined to communicate.



The parents of the blind and low vision were discussing the Braille Reading and Writing, and Assistive Devices for the blind and low vision. This was facilitated by RBI Chief Brailist, Ms. Lorrie Barbosa and Education Consultant and Retired Teacher for the Blind, Ms. Adelaida Elamparo who also discussed the learning of braille lessons to support the children at home.



The last session for the day was on the topic “*Nurturing Your Child’s Self-Esteem*” facilitated by Ms. Amy Mojica. The session aimed to develop social and emotional skills through home and school involvement.



The last day again began with message of encouragement from Ptr. Jayrick Dubria and topics were held in plenary sessions. The first was entitled “Teachers and Parents Collaboration” tackled by the SPED Teacher for the Blind, Ms. Gadelina Eborá and the SPED Teacher for the Deaf, Ms. Roseann Macaraig in Batangas City East Central School.



Their experiences encouraged parents to have smooth, active and good relationships with schools and teachers for the skills improvement of the learners. Teacher Eborá even used Braille in her topic to engage parents of the blind while Teacher Macaraig facilitated a game with parents of the deaf together with their children. They shared their best practices that worked well with parents who are supportive and very hands on in reviewing their children’s lessons at home. They emphasized the importance of partnership to create more opportunities for the learners to continually learn and grow.

The last topic was facilitated by Batangas Persons with Disability Affairs Office (PDAO) Head, Ms. Elvira Evangelista who discussed the services for Persons with Disabilities available in their community. Being a mother of a child with disability, she understands the needs of families with CWDs. During the session, Ms. Evangelista encouraged the parents to reach out to their local LGU municipalities particularly the Municipal Social Welfare Development Office (MSWDO) to inquire about the programs and services and linkages for the interventions of their children. She also answered parent's queries on PWD IDs, benefits and privileges

This was followed by the closing program in the afternoon where selected parents were asked to give impressions for the 3-day training. The parents were very happy and grateful to attend the training to meet other parents, enhance their skills, supplement their understanding and plan for their child's welfare.

Maasin City and Southern Leyte

Gabay witnessed the connection and collaboration of the Local Government Units to schools and homes beginning in the identification, referral, enrolment and continuity of services. This is very crucial in ensuring the improvement of the quality of services and programs to children with sensorial disabilities. Schools catering services to children with disabilities cannot accomplish this alone, that is why Gabay engaged parents and families in their children's education as effective means of ensuring their academic success.

For Southern Leyte and Maasin City parents' training, Gabay discussed and acknowledged the crucial involvement of the people in the Local Government Units and community leaders particularly from the Municipal Social Welfare Development Office (MSWDO) with Persons with Disability Affairs Office (PDAO) functioning under it. Equipping parents as advocates would involve PDAO's action and support. The office will give opportunities to schools, parents, and children to have the platform in voicing out their needs. But, with its limited resources and understanding, and lack of attention to the specific type of services, many of the initial steps could not be continued and sustained. With this in mind, Gabay initiated the participation of the MSWDOs and PDAOs from the 18 municipalities of Southern Leyte to strengthen the programs and services for children with sensorial disabilities.

This activity aimed to help and support educators in working effectively with parents and Local Government Units to improve the education of children who are blind and low vision, deaf and deafblind in their communities. The activity also hoped to ensure support of parents and community leaders' engagement in the education of children towards effective schools' partnerships and productive working relationships; establish an inclusive environment by having increased knowledge on sensorial disabilities, children's rights, and local government's policies and services; and generate plans of actions among service providers to meet the needs of blind and deaf children.



This activity was conducted at Kuting Reef Resort and Spa in Macrohon, Southern Leyte on February 14-16, 2023.

A pretest was administered before the sessions started. Sessions involved combining the parents of the deaf and blind, including the community leaders from PDAOs and MSWDOs, and another sessions separating the parents of the blind children from those with deaf and with LGU officials deciding which group to join. There were plenary sessions combining parents of the deaf, blind, deaf blind and with multiple disabilities, and community leaders. Break-out sessions were also done by dividing the parents of the deaf and blind/low vision, and allowed the community leaders to select which group according to their preferences. These sessions ensured interaction between the sectors and needs were expressed.

The topics for the training include i) understanding the situation of the children, ii) knowing the existing policies and rights for the children, and iii) expanding their knowledge on the available educational and medical services for their children. Parents of the deaf were introduced with basic sign language while the parents of the blind were taught braille reading and writing. Topics on the last day comprised LGU policies, programs and services to equip parents and community leaders to be the advocates for the children with disabilities, particularly the deaf and blind population. The contents of the sessions were taken and modified from the modules of Gabay such as Educating Children with Sensorial Disabilities (PLM5); Disability Sensitivity Awareness (PLM5); Introductory to FSL Course, and RBI training modules.



Prior to the training, Gabay conducted visits and courtesy calls to selected municipalities who have no special education programs, namely, Padre Burgos, Tomas Oppus, Libagon, Pintuyan, Bontoc, and San Ricardo.

The municipality of Malitbog was included in the visit because they have a blind enrollee. The visits aimed to increase the enrolment of children with sensorial disabilities in this specific division. Likewise, the team intended to follow up the identified blind and deaf children during the eye and ear screening conducted by the Gabay-trained Community Health Workers in coordination with the concerned MSWDO/PDAO for the list.





During the visit, MSWDOs also shared their challenges in validating information on the exact disability of the child. They were interested in working with Gabay to improve their dataset like the appropriate terms for the types of disabilities since most of their clients are not yet checked by medical specialists. They shared their confusion on the technical terms used, but very much willing to help these children by referring them to schools.

These concerns were included in the discussion during the activity.

A total of 55 parents, caregivers, and community leaders participated in the training. Of the total number of participants, 37 (67.3%) were parents and caregivers, and 18 (32.7%) were community leaders from Local Government Units.

Table 21. Number of Parents who participated in the Parents and Community Leaders Training on Supporting Children with Sensorial Disabilities in Maasin City and Southern Leyte

Division	Parents of the Deaf / Hard of Hearing			Parents of the Blind / Low Vision			Parents of other disabilities			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Maasin City	2	5	7		5	5		1	1	2	11	13
Southern Leyte	2	11	13	1	9	10		1	1	3	21	24
Total	4	16	20	1	14	15		2	2	5	32	37

It can be gleaned from the table above that the highest group was composed of 20 (54%) parents of the deaf and hard of hearing. It was followed by the parents of the blind and low vision with 15 (40.54%). There were 2 (5.4%) parents with children having other disabilities who joined the activity.

Of the total number of parents, 5 (13.51%) were males and 32 (86.5%) were females. The record shows that the training is generally participated by females.

Table 22: Number of Community Leaders who participated in the Parents and Community Leaders Training on Supporting Children with Sensorial Disabilities in Maasin City and Southern Leyte

Community Leaders	Male	Female	Total
Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officers	2	5	7
Persons with Disability Affairs Office – Focal Persons	8	1	9
Other Officers	2		2
Total	12	6	18

Eighteen (18) Officials and other Officers who attended were from the local government sectors. Of the 18 participants, 12 (66.6%) were males and 6 (33.33%) were females. There were 7 (38.9%) who are Municipal Social Welfare Development Officers, 9 (50%) are PDAO Focal Persons, and 2 (11.11%) are Administrative Staff.

The LGU Officials in each municipality led the discussions on the action planning with the parents attending. They also joined with the parents on learning sign language and braille reading and writing. The combination of LGU MSWDOs and parents gave way for a wide array of understanding from both sides. Parents pending questions regarding the main office who serves PWDs in the community were raised and resolved, although there were still things to work out but their awareness on the existence of PDAO was such a big step.

Likewise, according to the community leaders like PDAOs and MSWDOs, their experiences and understanding of persons with disabilities have expanded. They were reminded on the education aspects of these children. They admitted on having the list of PWDs only but not giving emphasis to the education of these children.

Gabay hopes that this type of training will bear fruits, specifically in Southern Leyte for the organization of SPED program in these municipalities who do not have SPED centers which will cater PWDs, and systematic referral of the MSWDOs to schools, and Municipal Health Offices for screening. These will also reduce the number of overaged learners with disabilities who were not exposed to literacy programs.

As for Gabay's next steps, it will be sending to DepEd the list of referred children with sensorial disabilities as provided by MSWDOs with the appeal that these School Heads will encourage the parents to let their children be enrolled in their respective schools. Second, Gabay will also distribute the available learning resource materials to assist the school heads, teachers, parents, and students in the coming months for the educational interventions of these children. Third, Gabay will include teachers from these prospective schools in the incoming training for teachers.

B.5 Technical Assistance and Mentoring School Administrators on Addressing Priorities from Program Quality Indicators Implementation (PQI)

As Gabay started its year 4 implementation, with planned activities to continue helping children with sensorial disabilities increase their access to quality education and improve reading performance, PQI implementation for these two schools will also continue with an additional focus and renewed priorities to provide an opportunity to implement a program quality improvement process, establishing a cycle of continuous program improvement.

The mentorship and PQI implementation activities specifically the *Mentorship Activities and PQI Implementation* aim to provide a series of targeted technical assistance addressing identified priorities for program quality improvement for two pilot school programs to: Improve the capacity of teachers to build communication skills and cognitive development of their students which is essential in reading improvement; Apply and demonstrate knowledge and skills shared by the mentoring team to children; and IAT to assess current services for children with sensorial disabilities based on the results of PQI or IAT to recommend actions based on the priorities identified PQI. Perkins specialists will provide technical support to Gabay staff for the implementation of the PQI process.

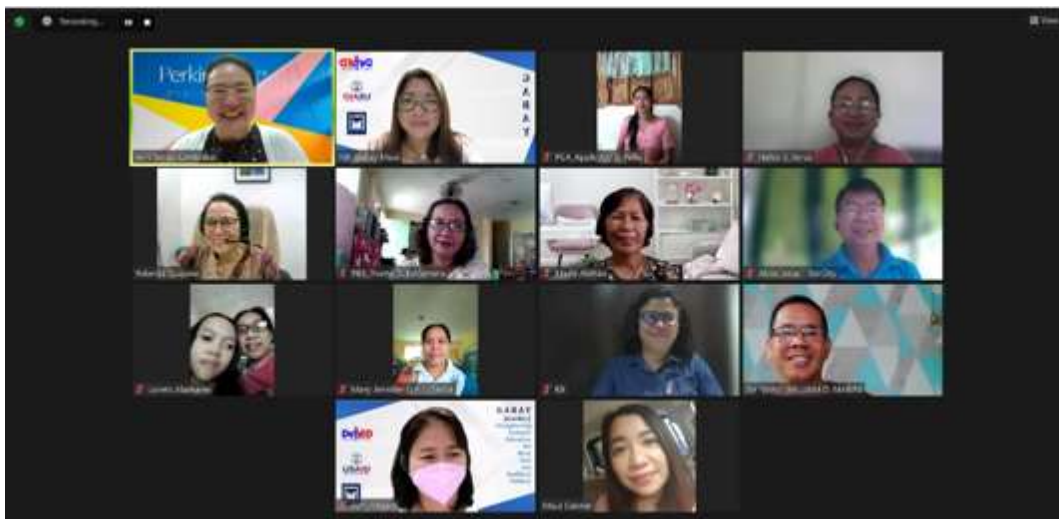
As the initial implementation of the activity, an online orientation was done with the members of the Internal Assessment Team (IAT) of each pilot school, which includes the principal, school SPED Coordinator, SPED Teacher, and parents of children with DB/MDVI by Perkins School for the Blind and Gabay specialists and parent leader from PAVIC. Ms. Ami Tango-Limketkai, Assistant Director for Asia and the Pacific Region of Perkins International facilitated the discussions. The orientation started by discussing the results of the provision of technical assistance to two PQI pilot school programs serving children with Deafblindness and Multiple Disabilities with Visual Impairment. Ms. Ami also gave a progress update on the initial implementation of the Program Quality Indicators. One of the highlights of the activity was the short workshop with the participants where the participants of each school identified the challenges they faced during the first phase of the PQI implementation. The identified challenges will be one of the priorities to be addressed, in addition to the priorities in PQI for each school.



Recommendations for the Phase 2 of the PQI Implementations were also presented which include the following:

- Students with disabilities should be prioritized in return to school plans.
- The focus should continue on the two pilot schools (BECS, SECS) for year 4. This provides an opportunity to implement a program quality improvement process, establishing a cycle of continuous program improvement.
- Implementation of the next cycle Program Quality Indicators at each school should be in coordination with an Internal Assessment Team (IAT) at each school. The IAT should include the sensorial disabilities special education teacher, school principal, and representative parent(s).
- Remote technical assistance sessions with Perkins should be supplemented with follow-up with the IA Team, Teachers and parents to provide ongoing feedback and support as they implement new skills and suggestions in their instructional practices.
- Clear process to collect observable data on student progress and change in teaching practice.

Ms. Ami also presented the needed output for Milestone 7 or Phase 2 of the PQI Implementation. This includes the continuous provision of technical assistance to teachers and administrators of the two PQI pilot schools, an increase in the provision of follow-up support, and mentoring of teachers and school principals, and a clear process of data collection to track progress in the teaching practice and in demonstrating the improved reading performance of the children with MDVI/DB. Ms. Ami also added that at the end of the year Perkins will present the data that has been gathered throughout PQI Implementation Phase 2, tracking the progress of the program for learners with MDVI/DB based on the PQI, and also the improved reading performance of students with MDVI/DB using the method that is appropriate for them.



On September 5-9, 2022, Perkins, Gabay and PAVIC specialists provided technical assistance to implement the Program Quality Indicator (PQI, round 2, Face to Face) at 2 pilot schools in Sorsogon City. The team worked with the Internal Assessment teams from the two pilot programs in Sorsogon City. The Internal Assessment team consists of the SpEd Teachers handling children with VI/ MDVI, the SPED Coordinator, School principals, and the Superintendent of Sorsogon School District.

Together, the team implemented the PQI and analyzed results that helped address program priorities in the Communication and Literacy component at 2 identified schools. Data towards the PQI were collected through classroom observations, focus group meetings with teachers, focus groups with Internal Assessment teams, and focus group meetings with parents of children with VI/ MDVI.

Mentoring and Technical Assistance Provision at Sorsogon East Central School (SECS)

Perkins School for the Blind, RBI-Gabay, and PAVIC team was welcomed in SECS by the school principal Dr. Neleuterio Dellosa and SPED Teacher Ms. Helen Jerus. Teacher Helen's class was composed of children with low vision and blindness and those with additional disabilities.

- Teacher Helen was observed to have challenges in structuring and scheduling of classroom activities. Perkins and Gabay specialists suggested a semi-circle set-up of chairs where the teacher stays at the center, facing the students for easier access to the children's worksheets to provide support when needed, as well as easier presentation of materials during activities.



- Suggestions for improving the literacy of children with MDVI were also given to teacher Helen such as finding their names on their chairs (names will be written in big and bold letters) as an initial approach. The teacher was also reminded of the consistent use of a communication board or calendar system to facilitate communication and anticipation of routines/schedules, offering choices to her student to facilitate communication, and pausing to allow time for her student to communicate.



- Perkins specialist also did a short focused group discussion (FGD) with the parents of children with visual impairment and those with MDVI, as part of the implementation of PQI and as well as provided some strategies to help their children at home in improving their literacy skills.



- After the observation of Teacher Helen’s class, Gabay and Perkins Team met with the school principal and other members of the IAT to briefly discuss the technical assistance that will be provided and also discuss the PQI priorities to be addressed. The group was also joined by DepEd Sorsogon City Division SPED Focal Person, Mr. Alvin Jerus and some parents from PAVIC or Parent Advocates for Visually Impaired Children.



Mentoring and Technical Assistance Provision at Bacon East Central School – (BECS)

Perkins, Gabay, and PAVIC specialists did an on-site technical support visit to Bacon East Central School and were welcomed by the school principal, Mr. William Mabini and SPED Teacher for the visually impaired and MDVI, Ms. Yvette Estremera, and other SPED Teachers.

- Teacher Yvette's class was also composed of children with visual impairment (blind and low vision) and those with additional disabilities.



After the classroom observations with Teacher Yvette, Perkins, Gabay and PAVIC specialists met with the school's administrators, district supervisors and SPED teachers to give a short discussion on how PQI will be implemented in BECS.



Results of the Visit

- The PQI Team has identified 3 teachers of the visually impaired from the two pilot schools in Sorsogon also handling children who are MDVI.
- The team observed a much larger group of children, who present additional disabilities on top of their visual impairment from both schools, compared to only 2 students with MDVI to what was originally presented during the first phase.

Through discussion with the teacher and initial assessment of these students, at least 10 students require additional support.

- Due to their additional disabilities and/or lack of support received, these children are not ready to be mainstreamed in the regular programs. They require special education services in self-contained classrooms serving learners with VI/ MDVI and a proper inclusion facilitator to support their learning needs when they decide to be mainstreamed in the regular programs.
- Based on the assessment, the team worked with the teachers to come up with priority goals for the improvement of students' literacy skills using the method that is accessible for each individual learner. Some students learn using a combination of: speech, sign language, large print, braille, pictures, and tangible objects.
- Mid-August 2022 was the beginning of face-to-face schooling for all the children in Sorsogon after being in lockdown since March 2020 when the pandemic hit. Although there was some support provided to families like modules and home visits, the support was not enough for many of these children.
- School attendance is a challenge for many students with MDVI/ VI. One self-contained classroom held 44 special education students that were put in a classroom rotation so they can attend school. Some children with MDVI only attend school 1x a week for a maximum of 2 hours each time. Another self-contained classroom had over 20 children on a classroom rotation to attend school. The cost and the distance getting from home to school can be challenging for many families in these areas and parents are trying to work with their local governments to provide support for them to bring their students to school regularly.
- The role of parents/families in the success of their children's learning outcomes is vital given this situation. During this visit, parents were provided initial information about the learning goals for their children in the area of literacy. They are informed that there will be follow-up sessions with the teachers and parents/families to make sure that they carry out activities at home that will support the learning of their children towards reaching their goals.

Next Steps and Recommendations

- The three (3) SPED teachers will plan the school program schedule of these children and seek advice from the Gabay and Perkins specialists then get the approval of the school administrators before orienting the parents.
- Perkins will continue to provide technical guidance to Gabay and PAVIC specialists, the school administrators, and Division Supervisor In-Charge in their work as they provide at least monthly follow-up support for parents, teachers, and the IA team throughout the year.
- Gabay and PAVIC specialists will provide ongoing follow-up and technical skills training for parents and teachers to support their work in helping children reach their learning goals.
- Perkins will provide technical skills training online for the teachers to help them build teaching skills as they work with their learners on their specific literacy goals as scheduled in the work plan.
- Perkins, Gabay and PAVIC will focus on data collection to track the progress of the children towards their individualized literacy goals as well as the improvement of the overall program on areas of the PQI throughout the year.
- Perkins will provide an online tracking work log sheet that Perkins, Gabay, and PAVIC specialists will update from time to time to strengthen follow-up assistance for the two pilot schools.
- Perkins and Gabay specialists will continuously update the school principals and Division Supervisor In-Charge of SPED for documentation and follow-up purposes on the progress of the students involved as well as the learning strategies practiced by the SPED teachers and the support provided by the parents/families to the students.

Face-to-Face Technical Assistance from Perkins International with Gabay and PAVIC Specialists

As schools started to open and return to face-to-face instruction this SY 2022-2023, the PQI was continued to be implemented through extensive teacher online updates, two site visits, and observations of teacher-submitted videos. Both classroom program assessment and technical assistance were provided through by a Gabay specialist, followed by a series of virtual meetings between Perkins and Gabay specialists.

On March 27-31, 2023, Ms. Ami Tango-Limketkai, Assistant Director for Asia and the Pacific Region of Perkins International led the provision of technical assistance to the two schools in the Division of Sorsogon City together with Ms. Marie Alonzo of the Parents Advocates for Visually Impaired Children (PAVIC) and three Gabay staff.

Mentoring and Technical Assistance Provision at Bacon East Central School (BECS)

Perkins, Gabay, and PAVIC specialists did an on-site technical support visit to Bacon East Central School and were welcomed by the new school principal, Mr. Arnold De Chavez and SPED Teacher for the visually impaired and MDVI, Ms. Yvette Estremera, and SPED Teacher for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, Ms. Mary Jennifer Lyn Garcia.



- Aside from handling children with sensorial disabilities, both teachers are also teaching students with other disabilities which include intellectual disabilities, autism, and Down Syndrome. The classroom set-up of the two teachers is a team-teaching set-up where one teacher is the main facilitator and the other one is the supporting teacher. This set-up is also the response to the recommendations made during the first phase of the technical assistance on PQI implementation.
- After each classroom observation, the team also provided technical assistance to the SPED teachers, teaching assistants, and student teachers.



- Parents were also involved and were also supported during the school visits. They were provided with activities that would help them understand and in turn, increase their support to their children with disabilities.



- Application of the recommendations during the initial phase of the technical provision was also observed in Teacher Yvette and Teacher Jen’s classroom activities such as teaching functional reading and the use of a calendar system (communication board) to students with multiple disabilities.



Mentoring and Technical Assistance Provision at Sorsogon East Central School (SECS)

The PQI Team was welcomed in SECS by the new school principal, Mr. Ernesto Deyto, SPED Teacher Ms. Helen Jerus and school SPED coordinator, Ms. Kiara Adison.



- Teacher Helen’s class was composed of eight (8) children with low vision and blindness and those with additional disabilities. She now has additional support from her teaching assistant and student teachers.
- During the previous visit to Teacher Helen’s classroom where she was observed to have challenges in structuring and scheduling classroom activities, Perkins and Gabay specialists gave suggestions on how to improve the set-up, and the current semi-circle set-up was observed during the school visit.
- Technical assistance from Perkins and Gabay was also provided to Teacher Helen as well as her teaching assistant and teacher interns.



- Parents of children from Teachers Helen’s class were also involved in the provision of technical support. Activities to help them increase support for their children with sensorial disabilities were also provided by PAVIC representative, Ms. Marie Alonzo.



- After the classroom observations, the PQI team met with the school’s SPED coordinator, Ms. Kiara Adison and Teacher Helen and discussed with them on how to increase support through environmental modification and the use of functional curriculum to improve functional reading of students with multiple disabilities.



Results of the Visit and Recommendations

- Similar to the previous visit, the team observed a larger group of children, who present additional disabilities on top of their sensorial disabilities from both schools, compared to only two (2) students with MDVI which were originally presented during the first phase. Due to their additional disabilities and/or lack of support received, these children are not ready to be mainstreamed in the regular programs. They require special education services in self-contained classrooms serving learners with VI/ MDVI and a proper inclusion facilitator to support their learning needs when SPED teachers decide to mainstream them in the regular programs.
- Some children who were previously in the self-contained class are now partially mainstreamed and only need additional support from the SPED teachers.
- Recommendations from the previous visit are now observed to be implemented in the current classroom programs for both schools.
- Based on the assessment, the team worked with the teachers to come up with priority goals for the improvement of students' literacy skills using a method that is accessible to each learner, such as using calendar systems to help in classroom organization, and accommodation and modification of learning materials (providing correct size fonts to learners with low vision).
- Recommendations for both classroom programs include maximizing the presence -of their teaching assistants by supporting and focusing on a student in the class who would benefit the most from one-on-one instructions, while the teacher facilitates the subject activities. Proper positioning of each student inside the classroom was also recommended, to improve the students' access to the teachers and to the learning materials.
- The role of parents/families in the success of their children's learning outcomes was again emphasized to the parents. During this visit, parents were reminded on the learning goals for their children in the area of literacy. They were also provided with activities that they can carry out at home that will support literacy learning of their children.
- During the final assessment and discussion between Gabay, PAVIC and Perkin's specialists and IAT Team, both schools' PQI scores have significantly increased compared to the last two years of the schools' PQI.

B.6 Presentation of the Inclusive Education Community Resource Center (IECRC) Manual of Operations

Gabay in collaboration with the Divisions of Batangas City, Sorsogon City and Maasin City has identified the IECRCs sites to house the resources that aim to support Gabay's goal of strengthening inclusive education for children with visual and hearing impairments. These resources consist of Computer Set (desktop and CPU) with Braille Translation software - Duxbury, Screen Reader Software –JAWS and MS Office Home & Business , All-in-One Printer with Toner, Braille Embosser (single-sided), Epson Scanner, Portable Electronic Magnifier, Braille Classic Gray, Talking Calculator, Braille Display, Spiral rings Plastic Comb, Braille Paper and the learning resources produced by RBI and those developed by teachers as outputs during trainings and edited by Gabay.

An IECRC Manual of Operations has been developed by Gabay with the same purpose as the H/ATC Operational Guidelines, that is, providing the implementers with ready reference for the efficient and effective operations of the IECRCs to achieve the intended objectives. Ms. Angelita Esdicol, the former Director of DepEd Bureau of Elementary Education gave her expertise and skills for the making of IECRC Manual.

It has undergone the same phases as the H/ATC Operational Guidelines cited in the above discussions on the *Presentation of the Hearing/Audiological Test Center Operational Guidelines* .

On November 8, 2022, the IECRC Manual of Operations was also presented by Gabay to 20 Regional and Division officials with school heads, teachers and personnel from the sites where the IECRCs are established, namely, Batangas City East Elementary School, Sorsogon East Central School, and Maasin City SPED Center. DepEd Central Office Student Inclusion Division (SID) Chief Education Program Specialist, Dr. Jose Tuguinayo and Supervising Education Program Specialist, Dr. Salvacion Olinares were also present during this activity.

Many of the participants who attended were able to review and provided their comments in advance to this Manual.



Below are the comments and recommendations for the IECRC Manual:

- Consider the country's laws and policies on the education of Learners with Disabilities which can include all the references already mentioned in the manual i.e. provisions in the constitution, various DepEd DOs, various Laws and RA11650.
- Give clarity and emphasis on the definition and understanding of Inclusive Education in the country as embodied in RA11650 consistent with how inclusive education is understood in the rest of the world.
- Give specific focus on the legal mandate to establish IELRCs in all cities, municipalities in the Philippines as per RA 11650
- Cite roles of IECRCs in relation to the provisions of RA 11650. These IECRCs will certainly be established soon and it should be clear to the readers of the Manual what to expect from these IECRCs. The point persons like SDS, Sped teacher, and School Principal should be trained and know the roles and responsibilities and good practices should also be included as well.
- Give emphasis perspective of Spectrum Education to design curriculum in different disciplines and must use "typical learners" instead of regular children.
- Discuss the IECRC in the context of Filipino Learners.

See Annex for Revised ILRC Operations Manual

B.7 Inauguration of the Inclusive Education Community Resource Center (IECRC)

Batangas

On January 13, 2023, Gabay, together with officials from USAID/Philippines, Pacific Islands and Mongolia inaugurated the Hearing / Audiological Test Center (H/ATC) at Batangas Provincial Health Office and Inclusive Education Community Resource Center (IECRC) at Batangas East Elementary School. The inaugurations aimed to raise public awareness on the new Hearing Test Center and IECRC and to heighten their visibility among stakeholders to rally with the people with disabilities in the community/city/province for access of needed services.

Likewise, the inaugurations gave opportunities for the Partners to reaffirm their commitments during the turn-over ceremony. The inaugurations also highlighted the turnover of the Filipino Sign Language (FSL) Stories which is a collection of DepEd approved short stories adapted to sign language in video formats which are child-friendly and appropriate for Kindergarten to Grade 3 deaf learners. There was a meeting also between Gabay, RBI, USAID, and PLGU Batangas about the enactment, institutionalization, and sustainability of Gabay Ordinance in the province.

Batangas East Elementary School



After the inauguration at the Batangas PHO, USAID officials and RBI-Gabay headed to Batangas City East Elementary School to inaugurate the Inclusive Education Community Resource Center (IECRC) that houses USAID-donated equipment, assistive devices and learning resource materials to be used by Batangueño learners with sensorial disabilities.

The IECRC was established last August 2021 but the formal launching was postponed due to the COVID restrictions and priorities. With the ongoing face-to-face classes, the Batangueño learners with sensorial disabilities can now access these resource materials, devices and equipment. These include Braille Equipment such as the Perkins Brailier, Braille Embossers, Printer, Scanner to be used to print Braille Reading Materials for the Blind which was demonstrated by Dr. Rosalina Panganiban along with Ms. Gaudelina Eborra and Ms. Roseann Montecalvo, both Gabay trained teachers for the blind and deaf, respectively. USAID officials interacted with parents and teachers while looking over the learning resource materials developed through Gabay.

The IECRC is open to other schools from other DepEd Divisions for them to access resources in teaching blind and deaf learners.



Dr. Panganiban also shared that these Braille equipment are very helpful for teachers of the blind in making their lessons and on improving reading proficiency among blind learners. Despite the pandemic, producing Braille materials did not stop because of these equipment.

Mr. Washburn also congratulated the DepEd Division of Batangas City for the triple increase in enrolment from 2019 to 2022. He encouraged everyone to continue working together collaboratively.

The program ended with a heartwarming special number rendered by the children whom the project serves – signed by deaf students and sung by blind and low vision students of Batangas City East Elementary School

Southern Leyte

Gabay also turned-over the equipment and assistive technology to the Maasin City School Division Superintendent, Dr. Genis Murallos and SPED Supervisor, Ms. Bruna Epiz. These equipment and assistive devices are housed at Maasin City SPED Center which includes Embosser, Braille Translator Software, Screen Reader Software, Braille, Portable Magnifier for Low Vision, Braille Display, Printer, Scanner, Computer Set, Talking Calculator, Assessment Books, Braille Papers with Spirals and Book Covers. Gabay also conducted an online training on the utilization of equipment among the teachers of the blind in the aforementioned school and other nearby schools last May 27-28, 2021.

With similar objectives to the inauguration in Batangas, the activity in Southern Leyte was held on February 15, 2023.

There was a meeting also that transpired between Gabay, RBI, USAID, LGUs Maasin City, and Southern Leyte that discussed the sustainability measures of the project in the area.

Maasin City SPED Center

After the inauguration at the Maasin CHO, USAID together with DepEd officials and RBI-Gabay headed to Maasin City SPED Center to inaugurate the Inclusive Education Community Resource Center (IECRC) that houses USAID-donated equipment, assistive devices and learning resource materials to be used by Southern Leyteño learners with sensorial disabilities.

The program also started with the ribbon cutting led by USAID Office of Education Deputy Director, Ms. Yvette Malcioln and DepEd Region VIII Director Evelyn Fetalvero together with parents of blind and deaf children. It was followed by the Unveiling of the Marker together with DepEd Division of Maasin City and Division of Southern Leyte officials.



The Southern Leyteños' learners with sensorial disabilities can now access these resource materials, devices and equipment. These include Braille Equipment such as the Perkins Brailier, Braille Embossers, Printer, Scanner to be used to print Braille Reading Materials for the Blind which was demonstrated by IECRC Custodian, Ms. Eden Maamo, Gabay-trained teacher for the blind along with Gabay trained teachers for the deaf.

USAID officials interacted with parents and teachers while looking over the learning resource materials developed through Gabay. The IECRC is open to other schools from other DepEd Divisions for them to access resources in teaching blind and deaf learners.



Teachers also shared how these Braille equipment were very helpful for them as teachers of the blind in making lessons during classes to improve reading proficiency among blind learners. Despite the pandemic, producing Braille materials did not stop because of these equipment.

Similarly, deaf children deserve access to quality inclusive education through the provision of appropriate learning resource materials. Like Braille, deaf children need access to Filipino Sign Language or FSL as their medium to communicate. In addition to these learning resource materials for the IECRC, Gabay has also turned over the FSL stories in USBs to DepEd Divisions of Maasin City and Southern Leyte. These are intended for teachers to improve the reading performance of their deaf learners in Kindergarten to Grade 3. These can also be used in classes that practice inclusion of deaf learners.

“DepEd Region VIII recognizes your commitment in promoting the rights of children with disabilities and improving learning for every child with all these resources to support DepEd in its effort to provide inclusive education in the country.”

- DepEd Region VIII Eastern Visayas, Regional Director, Dr. Evelyn Fetalvero



Dr. Fetalvero emphasized that among the 13 Divisions of Eastern Visayas Region, Maasin City and Southern Leyte are very fortunate to be given these gifts to the learners. She encouraged DepEd officials, school administrators and teachers to maximize the use of these resources and ensure that the purpose of having this center is fully achieved.



“ALL the support that this project has provided to us – from materials to trainings...will not be put in vain. The seed that you have planted in Maasin City SPED Center is now growing and I hope to see the fruits of our partnership with our passion and dedication, together we can make it possible - para sa bata, para sa bayan (for the children, for the city)” - DepEd Division of Maasin City, Schools Division Superintendent, Dr. Josilyn Solana

Dr. Solana on her message gave reminders to reach out to those children with disabilities that are not yet in school through child mapping. She notably mentioned the increase in their enrolment was achieved with the help of the Gabay project as their guide in the Schools Division of Maasin City.

It was followed by a video presentation prepared by the Maasin City SPED Center to show Gabay interventions and how these have helped their schools, teachers, parents and learners who are blind and deaf.



“All of our collaborative efforts have had a tremendous impact on the very young children in our project. Teachers are now more proficient and confident in teaching children with disabilities. Parents are very happy that they can now better understand their children and their needs and are very hopeful of their future.” - USAID Office of Education, Deputy Director, Ms. Yvette Malcioln

The program ended with a finale special number rendered by students in regular and SPED classes to promote and celebrate inclusion in Maasin City.



B.8 Production of Additional Learning Materials

For the Blind

The Department of Education (DepEd) is committed to inclusive education, ensuring that all blind children receive appropriate education in regular classroom settings. Inclusive Education (IE) is enshrined in Philippine laws and international documents, emphasizing the collaboration between Resource/SPED Teachers for the Blind and GenED Teachers. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the education landscape for blind children, with parents as the primary source of knowledge. Gabay acknowledges the importance of GenED teachers and parents in the education of blind children, but they are not adequately trained to address their literacy needs.

To increase participation and quality education, Gabay has provided trainings on braille reading and writing to both Resource/SPED and GenED teachers and parents.

The *I Can Read Braille* module in English, written for educators, provides reading exercises and activities for students with visual impairments and family members working with them. The companion volume, *I Can Read Braille* in Filipino,



delves into the braille curriculum for teaching reading and writing braille. The *Prototype Lesson Plans and Activity Sheets for Blind and Low Vision Students in the Inclusive Setting* is a compilation and were prepared by GenEd and SPED teachers for the visually impaired and reviewed by the consultants ensuring the outputs were suitable and appropriate to the learners and the classroom setting.



Through these materials, Gabay aims to create bridges and networks among experienced braille teachers and users, ensuring future generations can share in their past successes in educating blind children.

For the Deaf

FSL Stories



As one of the Gabay's intermediate results to improve reading performance among deaf learners, this initiative hopes to:

- provide teachers varied learning resource materials to improve reading comprehensions of the deaf learners;
- encourage the teachers to utilize Visual Gestural Communication (VCG) as part of FSL component; and
- appreciate the Deaf Culture by advocating more stories with subtitles for deaf and hearing peers in schools.

Production of the FSL Stories in Video Format

The stories for Kindergarten to Grade 3 were made into an animation with sign interpretation and captions. The videos for Batangas are now being validated by Deaf professionals and Filipino Sign Language Interpreter to ensure proper signing of words in context. It was packaged in one (1) Flash Drive/USB for distribution to the Gabay Inclusive Education Community Resource Centers (IECRCs), schools, trained teachers, and parents including the new deaf enrollees. It can also be accessed through this link <https://bit.ly/3UzeMyR>.

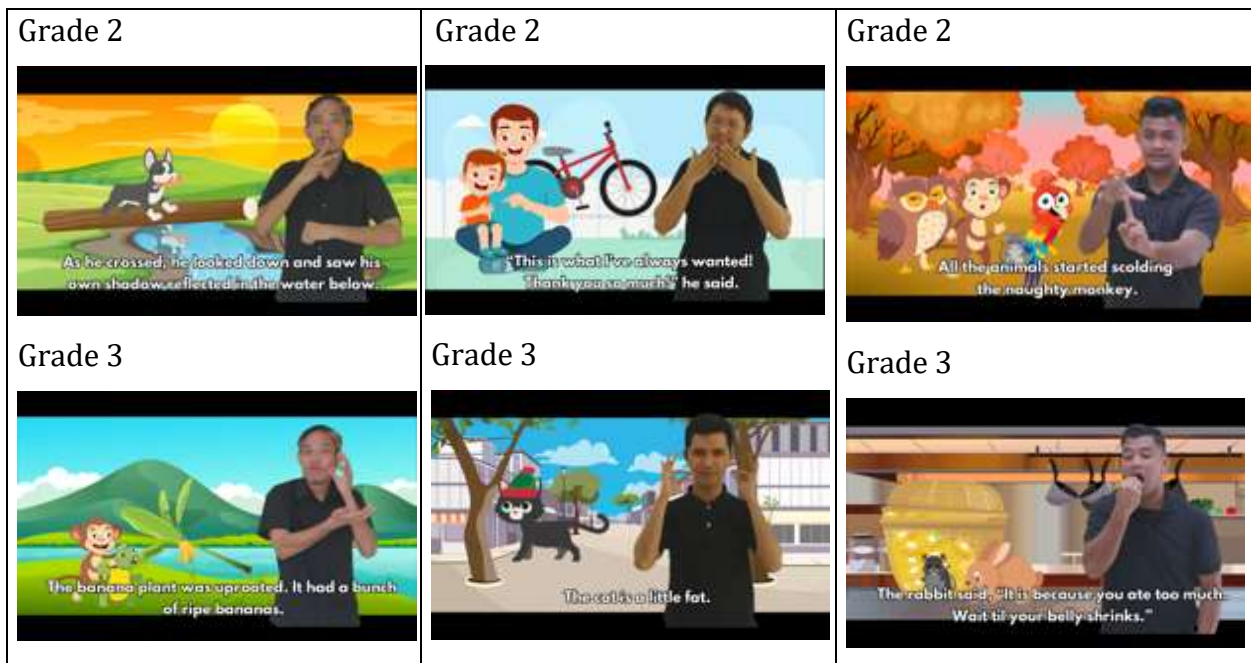


Below are some of the photos during the filming of the FSL Stories in the project sites:

Batangas	Sorsogon	Southern Leyte
Production		
<p>January 8-11, 2023</p>  <p>Deaf Artists: Ron Daryl Quiño Iñigo Asilo</p>	<p>January 31 – February 2, 2023</p>  <p>Deaf Artists: Ryan Clint Marcaida Omar Emata</p>	<p>February 8-10, 2023</p>  <p>Deaf Artists: Floyd Basco Heron Ocson</p>

Below are some of the FSL Stories outputs:

Batangas	Sorsogon	Southern Leyte
<p>Kinder</p> 	<p>Kinder</p> 	<p>Kinder</p> 
<p>Grade 1</p> 	<p>Grade 1</p> 	<p>Grade 1</p> 



The FSL Stories Team is composed of Mr. Mark Jayobo as Sign Language Interpreter, Mr. Justine Barcenas as Deaf Mentor, and Ms. Shev Payo and Ms. Maui Gabriel as Editors.

Copies of FSL Stories were turned-over to Batangas City East Elementary School on January 13, 2023 and to Maasin City SPED Center on February 15, 2023 during the inauguration of the IECRCs in these areas.

These FSL stories are for pilot testing to over 200 schools covered by Gabay as one of the reading interventions to improve reading performance among deaf learners. It is also intended to be used not just by SPED teachers for the deaf but also by GenEd teachers during their regular classes with inclusion of deaf learners.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Rationale of the Activity

The Filipino Sign Language (FSL) Curriculum for Kindergarten to Grade 3 was first drafted last February 26 to 28, 2020 through a Workshop in partnership with the Department of Education's Senior Education Program Specialists from the Curriculum Development Division and from the Student Inclusion Division, teachers of deaf children, Gabay Consultants for Deaf Learners who were both former DepEd officials, specifically from the Special Education Division of the Bureau of Elementary Education. This was initiated by looking at the legal bases of Republic Act 11106 or The FSL Act which states that FSL should be taught as a separate subject in the curriculum for deaf learners. Gabay started the activity in consultations with DepEd Officials, a few Deaf professionals, and non-deaf teachers of the deaf.

This Curriculum has four (4) areas: Receptive and Expressive Language, Reading and Study Skills, and Writing and Composition. Each area has domains with key components of content standards and performance standards. From these standards, the learning competencies were identified and listed. The development of the curriculum was purposely designed as one of the interventions to improve the reading scores of children who are deaf. The comments of the initial draft were gathered from different stakeholders through Consultation Meeting last June 26, 2020. These comments were considered in the revision of the FSL Curriculum by Gabay and its Consultants.

This document was discussed during the workshop on Reading Development for Deaf Learners on September 7-11, 2020 which was participated in by the teachers of the deaf from the three project sites. These teachers piloted the revised draft or Try-Out Copy. During the workshop, the participants prepared Lesson Plans and Activity Sheets based on the FSL Curriculum. Each Special Needs Education (SNEd) teacher was assigned one Learning Competency taken from the FSL Curriculum's four (4) areas: Receptive and Expressive Language, Reading and Study Skills, and Writing and Composition.

Their outputs include 1) Prototype Lesson Plans (LPs), and 2) Activity Sheets (ASs) which can be utilized by parents or family members of deaf children in home-based distance learning in response to the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the workshop was the field try-out of the FSL Curriculum for the pilot schools from the school year 2020-2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Last June 2021, a questionnaire was developed and sent to teachers in these pilot schools to gather their feedback on their experiences in using the Curriculum for that school year. Their comments were retrieved and analyzed to improve the FSL Curriculum.

There were 48 teacher-respondents from out of the 35 pilot schools that submitted their feedback on the FSL Curriculum. The full details of the results were documented in the October 14, 2021, report "FILIPINO SIGN LANGUAGE (FSL) CURRICULUM: FEEDBACK FROM TEACHERS IN ITS FIRST YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION, SY 2020 -2021, Administered via Feedback Sheet on July 2021" submitted to USAID for Gabay's Quarter 9 Report.

In the overall results, it showed that 38 or 79% of the teachers utilized the curriculum. Twenty-two or 39% of them mentioned that the FSL curriculum was the basis in making Learning Activity Sheets (LAS) and Worksheets (Ws) followed by 12 or 21% of teachers incorporated the FSL Curriculum on their Parent-Teacher Guide (PTG) during the pandemic, 9 or 16% teachers used this in making video lessons of sign language to their learners and 6 or 11% teachers took advantage of the curriculum in planning and providing instructions while the same numbers of 4 or 7% teachers applied the FSL curriculum in the online lessons and home visits.

Thirty-seven (37) or 77% of the teacher-respondents stated that the performance and content standards set for the grade level are suitable and appropriate, while 3 or 6% mentioned that some performance and content standards are too advanced and difficult for a particular grade level. These might be the same teachers (2 or 4%) who disclosed that these were too difficult and needed revision, while 32 or 67% revealed that areas and domains covered the needed content for a deaf learner.

Although all of them mentioned that all competencies indicated were relevant and significant, 34 or 71% commented that the sequencing of competencies from simplest to complex is okay and these are arranged accordingly and well-organized. There were also 39 or 81% of the teachers who expressed that the competencies for the domains are adequate and suitable.

In terms of specific learning competencies, 25 or 37% of teacher-respondents proposed revisions through sub-tasking competencies, while 16 or 24% suggested simplifying the statement in the competencies. Thirteen (13) or 19% of the teachers recommended adding competencies or adding some statements to particular competency, 1 or 1.5% asked for enhancement of curriculum, 2 or 3% appealed for revision/ replacement of statements in the competencies, and 1 or 1.5% demanded transferring the competencies to other grade-levels (1 or 1.5%). Nine or 13% recommended that a particular competency is too difficult and cannot be achieved by a deaf child and should be deleted.

Although results were limited due to adjustments of many teachers to the different learning delivery modalities during the pandemic, there was still valuable information gathered on specific competencies and domains. With these results, Gabay made the second revision of the FSL Curriculum.

The second version of the FSL Curriculum contains (i) the consolidated comments on the competencies cited by the pilot teachers in the First Feedback Sheet; (ii) DepEd issued Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) during the pandemic and has a new version for 2022-2023; and (iii) the Competencies cited in the first version not deleted or replaced.

As Gabay is nearing its end, the FSL curriculum will also face its last phase which is the finalization and presentation to the DepEd office. But before final revision and presentation, Gabay again conducted a last round of feedback gathering for the second version of the FSL Curriculum this school year 2022-2023. A modified revised questionnaire was again disseminated to the try-out teachers, filled out by and gathered from some teachers of the deaf in the target areas of Gabay on March 2023. Another unique process content of this latest gathering of feedback was the involvement of the Deaf Teachers in the non-project sites teaching in public schools, getting their feedback on the content of the curriculum.

B. Purpose / Objectives of the Activity

This corresponds with the purpose of the first questionnaire developed for the first gathering of feedback from the teachers of the deaf. The 2nd version of the questionnaire has also combinations of open-ended and closed questions to collect feedback from the teachers of the deaf in the target schools, and from the teaching Deaf professionals.

Its specific purposes in administering the second questionnaire are:

1. To gather comprehensive answers from the respondents on what they think about the utilization of the second version of the FSL Curriculum in general,
2. To find out how the teachers of the deaf, and teaching Deaf professionals utilized the FSL Curriculum for their lessons and SLMs developed for the blended learning and type of classroom program, and
3. To determine the teacher's teaching Deaf professionals' suggestions and recommendations for enhancement, revision, and deletion of competencies per domain as well as specific content embedded in the competencies.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Before the questionnaire distribution, Gabay sent letters of communication to the regional and division offices for the teachers of the deaf, and also the teaching Deaf professionals.

This time around, there were seven (7) DepEd divisions that were part of Gabay sites: Batangas City, Batangas, and Sto. Tomas City, Sorsogon City, Sorsogon, Maasin City, and Southern Leyte. However, there were some Deaf professional respondents from non-project sites: Division of Quezon City, NCR; Division of Rizal, Region 4 A, and Division of Cagayan, Region 2.

1. Profile of the Teachers in the Gabay sites

1.1 Participating schools per division

There were 57 schools involved in the implementation of the FSL curriculum that submitted the feedback as presented in Figure 1. Of the total, the highest number of schools with 27 (47%) schools were from Batangas, followed by 12 or 21% from Sorsogon. There were 8 (14%) from Southern Leyte, 4 (7%) from Batangas City, 3 (5%) from Sorsogon City, 2 (4%) Sto. Tomas City, and 1 (2%) from Maasin City.

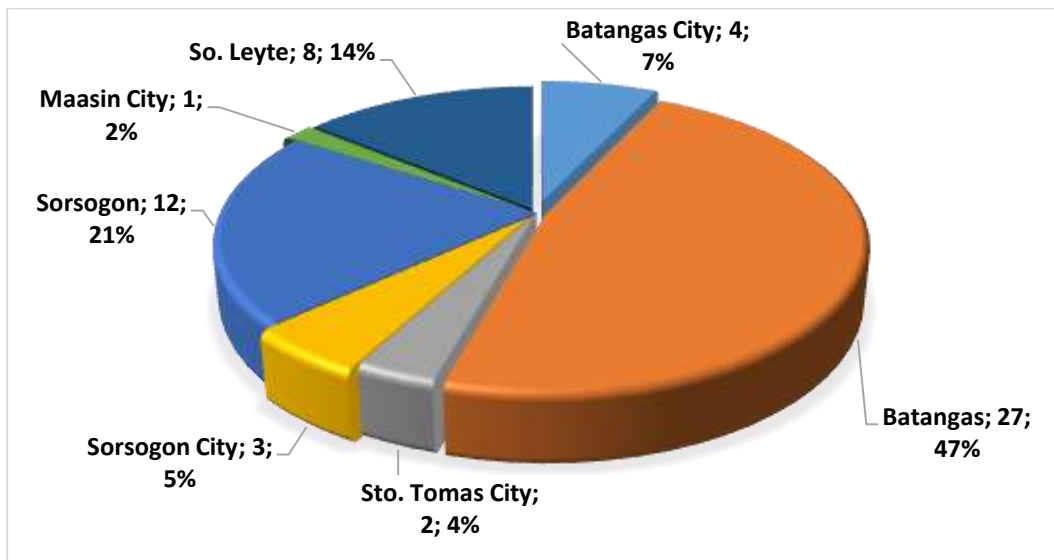


Figure 6. Total number of teacher-respondents per division.

1.2 Gender of teacher-respondents

There were 65 teachers of deaf learners from the 57 pilot schools. Figure 2 below indicates the teacher-respondents' gender classification. There were 63 (97%) females and 2 (3%) males. There were more respondents from the division of Batangas which had 27 (41.54%). It was followed by the number of teacher-respondents from Sorsogon division with 14 (21.54%). The third spot is Southern Leyte with 8 (12.31%) teachers with only 2 males among all the respondents. The fourth spot belongs to the three divisions of Batangas City, Sorsogon City, and Maasin City with same 5 (6.15%) teacher-respondents. Sto. Tomas City has 2 (3.07%) teacher-respondents.

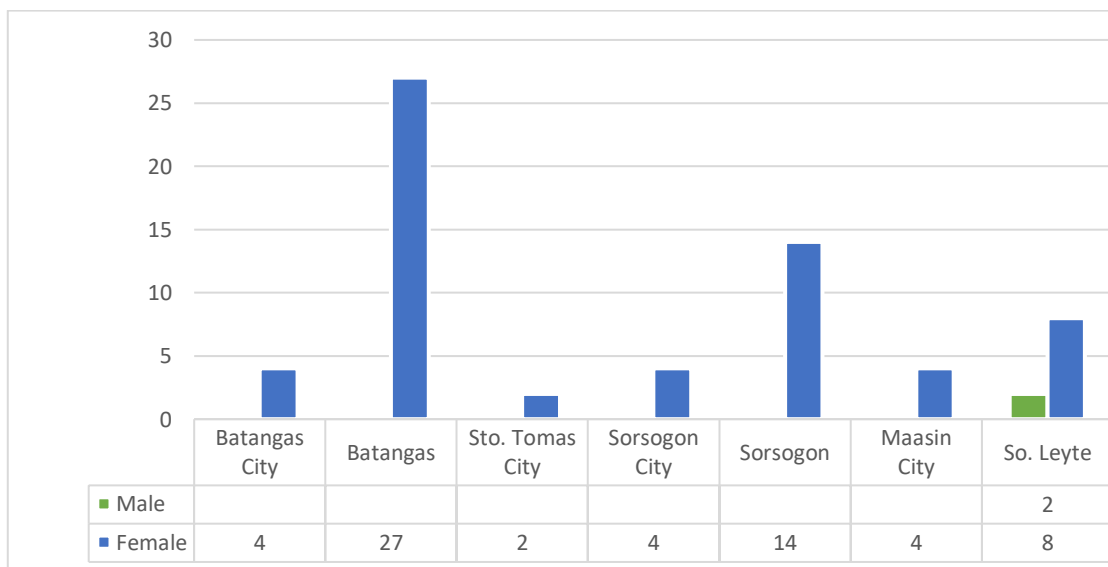


Figure 7. Gender of teacher-respondents per division

1.3 Grade-level handled

The 65 teacher-respondents from 57 schools accommodated different grade levels of deaf learners as presented in Table 23.

Table 23. Grade-level handled by teacher-respondents per division

Divisions	Non Graded	Kinder	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4-6	Multi-Grade	Total
Batangas City	2		1				1	4
Batangas	15	3		1			8	27
Sto. Tomas City	1						1	2
Sorsogon City			1				3	4
Sorsogon	4						10	14
Maasin City		1					3	4
Southern Leyte	2		1		1	2	4	10
TOTAL	24	4	3	1	1	2	30	65

Of the total, 30 or 46.15% of the teachers handled multi-grade levels. This means that one teacher handled more than one grade level of deaf learners. Twenty-four or 37% of the teachers had only non-graded students this school year. Four (6.15%) teachers handled Kindergarten learners, 3 (4.61%) accommodated Grade 1 learners, 1 (1.54%) each for both Grades 2 and 3 learners, and another 2(3.07%) teachers handled Grades 4 and 6 learners. The teachers of the later higher grade levels used the FSL Curriculum and Grade 3 MELCs because they thought these competencies need to be developed among their learners.

1.4 Types of the program implemented

Table 2 below indicates the types of programs implemented in the 57 schools. Among 65 teacher-respondents, there were 57 (87.7%) teachers who catered to deaf students this school year in special classes. Special class means a set-up where learners are enrolled in a self-contained room under a SPED teacher or resource teacher. Four (4) or 6.15% of teachers handled deaf learners in the inclusion program. The inclusion program is a set-up where learners are enrolled in a regular class or mainstreamed program and they

either have resource teachers or only advisers in the regular set-up. However, 4 or 6.15% of the teacher-respondents were having deaf learners in both special classes and inclusion programs. They provided follow-up classes to their learners who were in the inclusion set-up.

Table 24. Type of program implemented by the teacher-respondents per division

Divisions	Special Class	Inclusion	Both
Batangas City	3	1	
Batangas	23	1	3
Sto. Tomas City	2		
Sorsogon City	3	1	
Sorsogon	13		1
Maasin City	4		
So. Leyte	9	1	
TOTAL	57	4	4

2. Profile of the Teaching Deaf Professionals

There were seven (7) deaf professional respondents. Three (3) of these came from the project sites while four (4) were from non-project sites. For those in the non-project sites, their feedback and participation as respondents were limited to the content of the FSL Curriculum and not on their utilization.

Among the seven Deaf respondents, three (3) of them graduated with Bachelor's degrees in Education. Two (2) of them graduated with the Diploma in Arts for Computer Design, and Theology. There were two (2) who both had Diplomas in Business Technology and took up Certifications for Professional Education.

Table 25. List of Deaf Teacher-Respondents with schools/divisions/regions and positions

Number of Respondents	School/Division/Region	Position
1	Isabela SPED Center Extension (School for the Deaf) Division of Isabela, Region 2	Teacher
2	Batino Elementary School (SPED Center) Division of Quezon City, NCR	Teacher
3	Rosario Ocampo Elementary School Division of Rizal, Region 4A	Teacher
4	Batino Elementary School (SPED Center) Division of Quezon City, NCR	Teacher Aide

5	Prieto Diaz Center School Division of Sorsogon, Region 5	Teacher Aide
6	Maasin City SPED Center Division of Maasin City, Region 8	Teacher Aide
7	Sorsogon East Central School Division of Sorsogon City Region 5	Teacher Aide

The first three (3) Deaf Teacher-Respondents were the main facilitators of students learning in the classroom. The first two (2) Deaf teachers mentioned above are licensed professional teachers with plantilla items who handled special classes for deaf children. One of them had experience being a Teacher Aide for 10 years before becoming the main teacher of deaf learners for one year now. While the other one was a fresh passer of the teacher's exam and got his first job as a teacher of the deaf, also for a year now at Batino Elem. School. The third Deaf Teacher is not yet a board passer, but already had many accomplishments as a trainer of Sign Language. He was a Teacher Aide for 10 years and is now designated as a SPED teacher for deaf learners, sponsored by the local government units. The four (4) Deaf Teacher Aides had 2 months, 4 months, and 2 years experiences in public schools. One of them had three-year experience as a Teacher of the Deaf in a private school before becoming an Aide to a hearing teacher in a public school. These four (4) Teacher Aides were providing learners instructional support aides for the SNEd teachers who are hearing.

[See Annex for FSL Curriculum 2nd Feedback Report](#)

B.10 Braille Assessment conducted to 17 (Pre-Test) and 15 (Post-Test) Blind Children

I. Introduction

Before a child begins to receive any kind of instruction, it is important to find out what one needs to learn and the best way for him to learn it. Finding out someone's strengths and needs in a particular area is done through the process of assessment.

Assessment is the heart of all instruction because it allows an appropriate educational program plan. Assessment is the gathering of relevant information to help a teacher makes decision on the child's learning process. It gives an educational portrait of the child, the child's current performance level, and educational needs that serve as the basis for determining appropriate

individual instructional programs. There are many kinds of assessment and performance assessment is one of those.

Performance assessment requires learners to demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do by performing an activity or producing a product. It also provides information on learners' disposition and social skills.

Learners with significant vision loss and blindness are at an increased risk of literacy problems (Koering, et al, 2000). According to NASDSE, educators should assess students with visual problems as individuals. They should assess compensatory skills and educational achievement as well as areas of need that are unique to blind and low vision learners. Assessment should be carried out to document progress and uncover situations where progress does not match the student's potential and services needed to be changed. The poor reading achievement of students with blindness or low vision and the lifelong consequence of low literacy makes it imperative that their teachers use teaching practices and assessment tools that have demonstrated a record of success.

At the moment, there is a dearth of performance assessment tools prepared for Filipino blind and low vision learners in the Kindergarten to Grade III levels in the country. Hence, assessment tools were prepared. These tools are also envisioned to be used as pre and posttest to the blind students enrolled in School Year 2022-2023 to determine whether the Gabay interventions for these children have contributed to improved performance in Reading as project's commitment in Intermediate Result 2.

Development of Braille Reading Assessment for Kinder – Grade 3

The Philippine version of the Braille reading and writing assessment tool was developed by Gabay and a group of consultants who primarily identified competencies that can be assessed by observing the learner's performance. The writers carefully aligned the target skills for English and Filipino language content for learners who use print using the K12 Curriculum. The group also considered the recently released Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) for blind children in Filipino and English subjects. The team also adapted the Kamei-Hannan and Ricci Reading Assessment and the Diagnostic Assessment of Braille Reading Skills to develop the Philippine version of the Braille Reading and Writing Assessment.

The chart below indicates the grade level in which the skills are typically introduced:

Kinder	Grade 1	Grade II	Grade III
Phonological and Awareness Skills Filipino Braille (Uncontracted) and English Braille (Uncontracted) for K to Gr. II			
Basic Phonics and Decoding Filipino Braille (Uncontracted) and English Braille (Uncontracted) for K to Gr II; Unified English Braille for Grade III			
			Advanced Phonics and advanced Decoding Unified English Braille for Grade III
Sight Word Reading Filipino Braille (Uncontracted) and English Braille (Uncontracted): K to Gr. II; Unified English Braille for Grade III			
			Braille Contraction Unified English Braille for Grade III
			Vocabulary and Word Study Unified English Braille for Grade III

Teacher and Parent Questionnaires were likewise developed by Gabay and the consultants. Both questionnaires were adapted from EGRA for the Deaf Primary Caregiver and Teacher Questionnaires developed by School to School International (STS) together with Gabay. The table below lists the kind of tool, brief summaries of its content and duration, as well as who will administer it and to whom it will be administered to.

Table 26. Brief description of the tools and their administration

Type of the tool	Description	Administered to whom	Administered by whom
Braille Reading Assessment -Pre-Test/Post-Test	<p>Kinder-Grade 3 (Filipino) Grade 1-Garde 3 (English) Each grade level test has 5 subtasks namely a) Letter Sound Knowledge b) Letter Name Knowledge c) Simple Non-Word Decoding d) Oral Reading Fluency + Reading Comprehension e) Listening Comprehension Includes a student questionnaire and Book awareness questions programmed through KOBOLCollect app for scoring and installed in the tablet stimuli for students presented through Braille</p>	Blind or Low vision students who are braille users, enrolled in Non-graded, Kinder to Grade 3 of schools from Gabay project sites	RBI-Gabay Braille Consultants and Staff Has knowledge of Basic Braille (uncontracted and basic contractions)
Teachers Questionnaire	has 40 close-ended questions and often lasted 10-15 minutes per teacher. English language questionnaire accessible and responses encoded in the tablet through KOBOLCollect app	All trained SPED teachers of the students to be tested	Consultants or Gabay Staff who are familiar and oriented with Gabay interventions
Parents Questionnaire	has 48 close-ended questions and often lasted 10-15 minutes per parent.	administered to the parent or caregiver of the student to be tested	Consultants or Gabay Staff who are familiar and oriented with

Type of the tool	Description	Administered to whom	Administered by whom
	questionnaire accessible and responses encoded in the tablet through KOBOLCollect app		Gabay interventions

Validation Process

The validation process of the Braille Reading Assessment tool started with -consultations with other specialists and practicing teachers to confirm if the contents of the tool are appropriate and relevant to blind learners. The tool was critiqued for clarity, content accuracy, relevance, and appropriateness of language for the learners. Aside from feedback from the Braille teachers, the tool was also reviewed by a reading specialist and a curriculum specialist whether:

- a) the level of difficulty is appropriate for the blind learner
- b) the tool will enable the effective collection of evidence, and
- c) if the tools provide clear instructions which can be easily understood by the teachers, learners, and other interested parties.

Last April 25 - May 20, 2022, the Braille Assessment tool was administered for validation to a total of eight (8) schools. Three (3) schools were from the National Capital Region (NCR), three (3) were from Region IV-A, and two (2) were from Region VIII. A total of 31 students from Kinder to Grade 3 were assessed for the validation out of the 40 targeted. Below are the data on the number of blind children involved in the validation:

Table 27. No. of students who took the Validation Process

School	Kinder		Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Batino ES	2	1							3
Bay Central School		1	2		1				4
Paaralang Pag-ibig at Pag-asa	1	1		1			1		4

School	Kinder		Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3		Total
Bagong Silan Elem. School								1	1
Antipolo	1	2							3
Naval SPED	2	1							3
Ormoc SPED	2								2
PNSB	1	1					5	2	11
TOTAL	9	7	4	1	1		6	3	31

From this validation, results gathered are the following:

- Reduce the number of items specifically for the listening part of the Grade 1 assessment tool in English, identifying beginning sounds from 52 items to 25,
- Modify the number of syllables per word to a maximum of two (2) syllables for Kinder; and a maximum of three (3) syllables for Grade 3,
- Arrange the format of the presentation of the braille tool from simple to complex , across all assessment levels,
- Reorganize target skills by grade level, e.g. Consonant blends and digraph to be moved to Grade 3 level, and
- For Unified English Braille Code parts in the assessment, the following changes should be made:
 - Include a shorter paragraph with comprehension questions in the Grade 2 UEB assessment, and
 - Include a paragraph in contracted format with comprehension questions for Grade 3 UEB assessment.

The Gabay team with the consultants discussed the above results as well as the feedback on content, mode of presentation, and usefulness of the tool along with the information whether the tool was engaging as well as acceptable, cost-effective, and not time-consuming provided by the teachers of those children who participated in the validation.

After the discussions, the tool was then revised and re-written by the team considering the proposed changes to make sure that these will meet the needs of the target users.

The final tool was also put into an electronic form to be used by the assessor where all the results of the assessment will be uploaded online and the data gathered will be compiled in a single file for easier interpretation of results.

The Parent and Teacher Questionnaires were also validated during the administration of the pre-test, reviewed by the consultants, and modified as appropriate for the post-testing.

II. Objectives of the Braille Reading Assessment

The assessment intends to determine the impact of Gabay interventions on the Braille reading performance in Filipino and English of kinder, grades 1 to 3 blind students enrolled in Gabay schools in the three project sites for SY 2022-2023. The following are the research questions that will be answered after the conduct and interpretation of the results of the post-test:

1. *Is there a significant difference in the reading performance of blind students in kinder, grades 1 to 3 between the pretest and posttest in Filipino? English?*

1.1 *Which grade level posted the significant difference between the pretest and posttest in Filipino? English?*

1.2 *Which of the five (5) skills in each grade level in Filipino and English posted the significant difference between the pretest and posttest?*

1.3 *In terms of gender, which group posted the significant difference between the pretest and posttest?*

2. *Did the braille materials and training provided by Gabay improve the reading performance of blind students in kinder, grades 1 to 3 in Filipino and English as perceived by teachers, school heads, and parents?*

3. *Did the project interventions like the provision of braille materials and training influence the teacher's school heads' and parents' knowledge, skills, and attitude regarding their role in helping the blind children read as perceived by them?*

4. What other factors are perceived by the teachers, school administrators, and parents that have contributed to the improvement of braille reading performance of blind students in Filipino and English?

III. Conduct of the Braille Reading Pretest

Training of the Assessors

Prior to the conduct of the Braille Reading Pretest, training of four (4) assessors was conducted last September 2, 2022. These assessors were those consultants and RBI-Gabay staff who were engaged in the development of the tools.

Table 28. Guidelines used in administering the Braille Reading Assessment and Parent and Teacher Questionnaires:

	Braille Reading Assessment Tool	Parent/Teacher Questionnaires
Testing Space	<p>The appropriate space must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairs and a table for the assessor and the child. • Ventilation for the comfort of the child and assessor. The child’s responses may be affected if the room is too hot or too cold. • Good positioning of the child. The child should not be facing a corner/room entrance where lots of children/adults may pass by. • Good lighting that ensures the child’s braille movement can be visibly observed by the assessors. • Good angle of the tablet where the child could easily access the braille reading materials. 	<p>The appropriate space must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairs and a table for the administrator and interviewee • Well-ventilated and well-lit testing area and with minimized environmental noise

	Braille Reading Assessment Tool	Parent/Teacher Questionnaires
Tool Administration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is important to establish a playful and relaxed rapport with the children to be assessed, via some simple initial conversation among topics of interest to the child. The child should perceive the following assessment almost as a game to be enjoyed rather than an exam. It is important to read ONLY the sections in boxes aloud slowly and clearly. 2. Get the verbal consent of the child to be tested. Read exactly what is written on the screen/script. 3. For all the sub-tasks, read exactly what is written on the Instructions box of the tool. 4. Stay quiet and don't give clues or prompts to the student for 5 seconds, if the child hesitates or not answering, move on to the next item. Mark all self-corrections as correct. 5. Early Stop/Auto Stop Rule: If there are 5 consecutive wrong answers, move on to the next sub-task and click "Yes" for Auto-stop. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish rapport with the interviewee. Get the consent of the interviewee prior the actual administration of the tool. 2. Read exactly all what was written on the Instructions box of the questionnaire. 3. Thank the interviewee after administering all of the questions.

Administration of the Braille Reading Pretest

Last September 2022, just a month after the opening of classes, the Braille Reading pre-test was administered to 10 students from Kinder to Grade 3 from 7 schools in the six divisions. Below is the table on the profile of the students who took the pre-test.

Table 29. Number of students who took the pre-test

Gabay Site	Kinder	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	TOTAL
Batangas City and Batangas Province	3	1	0	0	4
Sorsogon City and Sorsogon Province	3	2	0	0	5
Maasin City And Southern Leyte Province	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	7	3	0	0	10

The table above shows that there was a total of 10 students who participated in the Braille Reading Pre-Test. Of the total 10 students, four (4) were from Batangas City and Batangas Province, five (5) from Sorsogon City and Sorsogon Province, and one (1) from Southern Leyte. Seven (7) students tested were at Kinder level and three (3) were from Grade 1. Among the 10 tested four (4) were males and six (6) were females.

Results and Discussions

A total of 21 students were scheduled for testing but only 10 were approved to be included in the analysis of data results. Some students were already overaged and were advised to be placed under ALS program or Transition program where they would benefit more. Some students were blind but with suspected additional disabilities such as autism and global developmental delay, and deafblindness.

Low Vision students were also not tested since they can read print and they were on the inclusion program and their teachers were using the MELC without the special learning areas taught to blind children. Some blind children from other schools were not tested due to the suspension of classes because of the typhoon in Batangas.

A total of 18 parents were interviewed for the Parent Questionnaire and only six (6) teachers were administered the Teacher Questionnaire. Two (2) schools in Batangas were not visited because of class suspension due to the typhoon.

The analysis of the pretest result as well as the information gathered from teachers and parents were put on hold. Since there were few children tested, it was decided that the Consultants will do the analysis when the post-test result will already be gathered.

IV. Conduct of the Braille Reading Posttest

Finalization of the Assessment Tools

The Braille Assessment tool, Parent Questionnaire, and Teacher Questionnaire tools were then again reviewed, based on the feedback gathered from the implementation of the pre-test. The team has decided to maintain the content of the tools as is so as not to affect the interpretation of the results and only editing the electronic version for easier input of the responses was done.

Conduct of Post-test in Braille Reading in Gabay Project Sites

A. Highlights

The post-test in Braille Reading was administered asynchronously to a total of 15 out of the scheduled 21 blind students in Gabay project sites. Out of the 15 blind students: nine (9) students in Kinder, four (4) students in Grade 1, and two (2) in Grade 2. There were no blind students post-tested in Grade 3. The table below shows the summary of the number of students who took the post-test in Gabay project sites:

Table 30. Number of students who took the Braille post-test

Gabay Site	Kinder	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	TOTAL
Batangas City and Batangas Province	5	2	0	0	7
Sorsogon City and Sorsogon Province	3	2	2	0	7
Southern Leyte Province	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	9	4	2	0	15

The table above shows that there was a total of 15 students who participated in the Braille Reading Post-Test. Seven (7) were from Batangas City and Batangas Province, seven (7) from Sorsogon City and Sorsogon Province, and one (1) from Southern Leyte. All ten (10) students who were given the pre-test were also given the post-test. The five (5) additional children who took the post-test were those who were absent because of illness during the pre-test and those who were not tested because of the class suspension. One student of the five was also added to the list since he enrolled right after the administration of the pre-test.

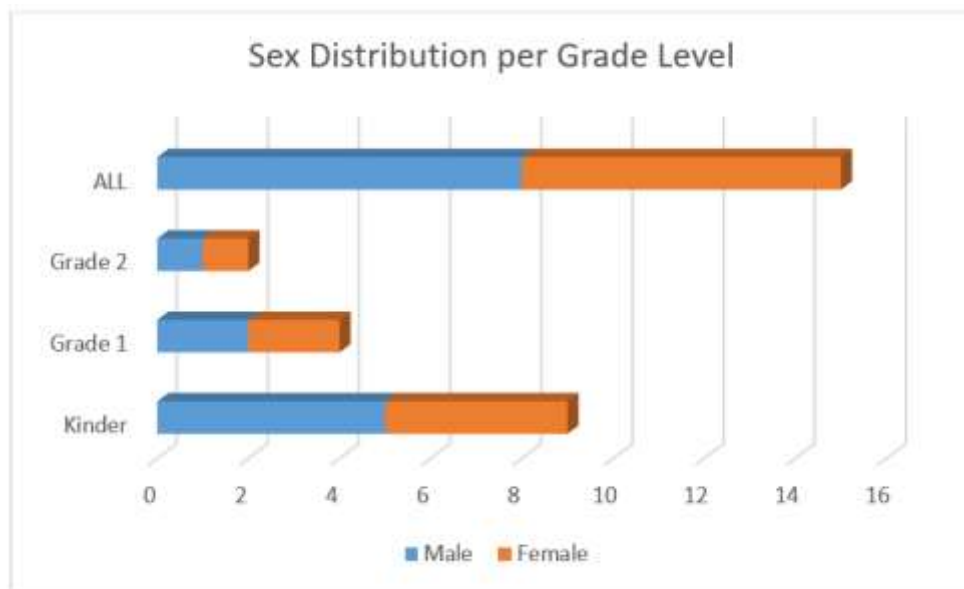


Figure 8. Sex Distribution per Grade Level

Of the 15 students tested for Post-Test, 8 were males and 7 were females. Five (5) male students were tested in the Kinder level while four (4) were females. In Grade 1, two (2) male and two (2) female students were tested. And lastly, in Grade 2, one (1) male student and one (1) female student were given the post-test.

For Parents and Teachers Questionnaires, a total of 13 parents and caregivers were interviewed, while 10 teachers out of 11 were interviewed for the teacher questionnaires. One parent interviewed during the pretest was not present because of work. For teachers, there were additional four (4) who were interviewed in the posttest but were not involved in the pretest interview. Braille Reading Assessment Result shall be reported on the 1st Quarter of Year 5 (17th Quarter).

I- Introduction

C. Rationale of the Activity

The Early Grade Reading Assessment or EGRA is a major component of Gabay in determining the effectiveness of the project interventions provided among the deaf learners from kindergarten to Grade 3, including non-graded. EGRA will provide a reliable and valid measure of skills that contribute to reading acquisition.

School-to-School International (STS) and Gabay Team administered EGRA Baseline to 165 deaf/hard or hearing children in the 39 schools of the Divisions of Batangas City and Batangas, Sorsogon City and Sorsogon, and Maasin City and Southern Leyte last March 02-13, 2020.

The full presentations of tables and descriptions of Baseline results are found in the separate document prepared by STS. The findings showed that in terms of the age group of the children tested, the overall mean age for the baseline population was 11.5 years, with a minimum and maximum ages of 4 years and 21 years, respectively.

The subtask results presented that assessment scores were higher in older students, regardless of grade assignments.

In terms of grade levels, as expected the grade 3 students had the highest mean scores on all FSL subtasks and kinder students having the lowest mean scores. All grades performed better in sign language comprehension level 1 than level 2 which means that students found it challenging to respond questions after reading the full story but instead they performed better in sentence to sentence reading followed by questions to be answered.

Assessment results also pointed out that overall, students performed better in receptive than expressive vocabulary. While in English Reading Assessment subtasks, the grade 1 students outperformed grade 2 students on the letter name identification subtask.

Subtask on familiar word reading was also a challenge for both Grades 2 and 3 deaf students as the grade 2 correctly answered about two (2) items out of 15 and the grade 3 students correctly answered about four (4) items out of 15 only. And even the subtask on sentence reading comprehension was also challenging for both Grades 2 and 3 students.

It was also noticed that having at least 1 or 2 family member who is also deaf in the household did not shown remarkable difference. Although on average results, students with at least one other family member who is deaf scored higher on three of the four subtasks such as receptive vocabulary, sign language comprehension level 1, and sign language comprehension level 2. Another child with 1 deaf family member scored high in sign language comprehension but it was still low.

In the performance by sex, girls outperformed boys on two of four subtasks, expressive vocabulary and sign language comprehension level 1. While the boys outperformed girls on receptive vocabulary. Both boys and girls had a mean score of 0.3 on the sign language comprehension level 2 subtask. Girls also outperformed boys on all English reading subtasks.

In the Sign Language usage, the options are: (1) Filipino Sign Language; (2) American Sign Language (ASL), or a Manually Coded English (MCE); and (3) incorrect/no response/not attempted. On all items, the largest percentage of responses were incorrect/no response/not attempted. However, a greater percentage of students responded with FSL than with ASL or MCE. Results showing more responses in FSL than ASL, maybe influenced not just in classroom but in the community since FSL has been treated just the same with mother tongue-based instruction in education.

All these above-mentioned baseline results are expected to show growth in the endline results. But the pandemic that heightened in years 2021 and 2022 may have certain effects in reading performance among deaf students in the project sites. -During these challenging times Gabay's training interventions for teachers and parents changed their mode of delivery and approaches from face-to-face to remote via zoom platform. It was only in 2023 that trainings were delivered face-to-face. -Below are the specific training interventions conducted in the six (6) DepEd divisions covered by the project.

1. Training of SPED and General Education Teachers

- Synchronous and Asynchronous Training on Educating Children with Sensorial Disabilities (June 01-30, 2020)
- The Introductory Course in Filipino Sign Language and Teaching Deaf Students via synchronous and asynchronous delivery in partnership with College of St. Benilde (August 03-18, 2020)
- Reading Development Workshop via synchronous and asynchronous approach anchored in the modified FSL Curriculum developed by Gabay (September 07-25, 2020)
- Online Learning Educational and Resource Network Training (LEARN)- Feb 08-10, 2022
- Face to Face Teachers Training on Enhancing Reading Experiences of Children who are Deaf (Nov. 19, 2022/ Jan. 28-29, 2023/ Feb. 18-19, 2023)
- First-Round Face to Face Classroom Observations and Mentoring- Nov. 2022/ Jan.2023/Feb.2023

2. Training of Parents/Caregivers of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children

- The Introductory Course in Filipino Sign Language and Teaching Deaf Students via synchronous and asynchronous delivery in partnership with College of St. Benilde (August 03-18, 2020)
- Face to Face Orientation on Disability Sensitivity Awareness for LGU, DepEd and Parents on November 20-22, 2019 in Batangas, January 14-16, 2020 in Sorsogon, January 27-29 in So. Leyte.
- Online Orientation on Disability Sensitivity Awareness for LGU, DepEd and Parents on March 23-25, 2021 in all sites.
- Online Parents Training on Supporting Children with Sensorial Disabilities (May 03-07, 2021/ November 08-12, 2021)
- Online Learning Educational and Resource Network Training (LEARN)- (Feb 08-10, 2022)
- Face to Face Parents Training on Supporting Children with Sensorial Disabilities on October 17-19, 2022 Sorsogon City and Sorsogon, November 14-16, 2023 in Batangas

City, Sto. Tomas City, and Batangas and February 14-16 in Maasin City and Southern Leyte.

The above trainings were supplemented by an intervention on the provision of learning resources. Gabay initiated the development of resource materials which is deemed important in reading instruction. These materials were developed for teachers' use but when these were distributed some materials were also identified as very useful to parents/caregivers and deaf students so these were made available to them. Below are the specific titles:

3. Provision of Learning Resource Materials (LRMs)

- Module for Educating Children with Sensorial Disabilities (released June 2020)
- Modified DepEd Curriculum on FSL (released September 2020)
- Regional Variations of FSL Dictionaries for Batangas, Sorsogon and Southern Leyte for K to Grade 3 (electronic version released on June 2021 & print version on September 2021) – *also given to parents and their deaf children*
- First Batch of Prototype Lesson Plans (LP's) and Activity Sheets (AS) for Teachers and *Parents* of K to G. 3 Deaf Children (released last September 2021)
- Advocacy materials for teachers and *parents*: FSL Alphabet poster, Children rights, Covid 19 flyer, The Adventures of Abel and Kiko
- Online Resources and links: CSB FSL Buddy App, CSB Deafworld Around You website, Bloom stories
- Regional Variations of FSL Stories for Batangas, Sorsogon and Southern Leyte for K to Grade 3 (electronic version released on February 2023)

To develop the basic skills on using the FSL effectively to improve reading performance of deaf students, Gabay identified Deaf Mentors in the specific areas of the project sites: Mr. Ron Daryl Quinio and Mr. Inigo Asilo for Batangas, Mr. Ryan Clint Marcaida and Mr. Omar Emata for Sorsogon, and Mr. Floyd Benedict Basco and Mr. heron Ocson for Southern Leyte. They were included in the training on Introductory Course on FSL and were involved in the development of the FSL dictionary. These Deaf Mentors conducted FSL trainings either online or face-to-face at the school level participated by both teachers and parents as shown below:

4. FSL Mentorship by Deaf Professionals

- Online Regional FSL Mentorship by Deaf Professionals (May 2021-July 2021)
- Regional FSL Deaf Mentorship via online in Batangas (August 2-5, 2022), in Sorsogon (August 2-12, 2022) and in So. Leyte (August 2-12, 2022)

Initially, the EGRA endline was scheduled on March 2022, but due to the COVID-19 outbreak which lasted for 2 years, USAID granted one year cost extension to Gabay. Hence, the EGRA endline was moved to April 2023. But Gabay saw the importance of monitoring the reading performance of deaf students through the midline evaluation. With USAID approval, STS conducted the mid-term evaluation last June 6-17, 2022 at the end of year 2021-2022 academic year. The mid-term evaluation did not include FSL-EGRA as in the of EGRA baseline, but instead focused on selected quantitative and qualitative measures that can help the project understand what was being implemented as expected and what needs to be improved for the extended year 4 implementation. Gabay and STS utilized quantitative and qualitative data collection tools during the mid-term evaluation and explored themes of “what”, “why”, and “how.” The specific types of tools used were Questionnaires, Key Informant Interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and Learners Participatory Activities (LPAs).

Below are the summary of findings and recommendations from the midterm evaluation:

Findings	Recommendations
Trainings and materials provided by Gabay are valued by beneficiaries and have made an impact.	Develop trainings and materials with more specific subject matter to build on the successful content already delivered to PCGs and teachers.
Despite interest, multiple obstacles prevented some parents and caregivers (PCGs) from participating in webinars and trainings.	Conduct informal research to find more PCG-friendly ways of providing trainings. These should ideally be less reliant on technology.
Gabay support helped PCGs improve their communication with their Deaf children.	Continue providing targeted FSL support and classes to PCGs—not just learners.
Learners generally expressed mixed emotions on home learning, but the vast majority felt positively during teachers' visits	Include school observations to learn more about how teachers interact with Deaf students in the classroom
PCGs support learning through a variety of activities	Provide PCGs with more concrete examples of how they can support learning at home.

Findings	Recommendations
About half of PCGs said they felt very confident in their ability to support their child's FSL learning and reading	Understand teachers' ideas about the best way to involve PCGs in their children's education
The most valued materials provided by teachers included activity sheets, the printed FSL dictionary, and SLMs	Learn more about how teachers used activity sheets and SLMs for sustainability
PCGs said that in-person visits were the most valuable support provided by teachers.	Find ways to build connections between PCGs and teachers, as in-person visits were highly valued by PCGs and learners
PCGs strongly believe their involvement in their Deaf child's education motivates their child to learn, but it is unclear how	Offer new opportunities for PCGs to engage with teachers and become more involved in their child's schooling.

Gabay team also identified challenges and opportunities during the midline evaluation:

- a. Many of the students were adjusting on the learners' participatory activity (LPA) after two (2) years not in school. They were having tantrums and a tendency to panic when surrounded and interviewed by people they were not familiar with.
- b. There were administrative problems that the Gabay teams gathered. So Gabay appealed that these should be addressed by the schools with the Division Office (specifically the Supervisor In-Charge of SPED) in the following months.
- c. Some Principals have already been transferred to other schools without programs for children with sensorial disabilities (CSDs). Others also retired. There was no proper turn-over of Gabay program undertaken by the former Principal to the new Principal.
- d. Some teachers who were trained were resigning from schools, either went abroad or promoted to other schools. The momentum of educational services already provided to CSDs had either were put on hold or being stagnant.
- e. Many parents needed face-to-face training. They were not able to attend via zoom because of the unstable internet connection along with their mobile signal problem.
- f. Some of the parents interviewed were husbands which is a good indication that interest to support their children come from both the wife and the husband. So Gabay training for parents encouraged all members of the family to participate.
- g. Parents' interviews really testified on what kind of impact the teacher has on them and the students. It even showcased how much they value the teachers' effort to the students. This reiterated the findings of studies that the teacher is the most important factor in the learning process of the child, hence support from the school heads, the parents and other stakeholders is crucial for their teaching effectiveness.

D. Purpose of the Activity – Goals and Objectives

STS, USAID and Gabay agreed that the endline evaluation results are directly responsive to the research questions outlined below. These questions are focused on deaf students' performance on Filipino Sign Language (FSL) and English reading. Seven evaluation questions are specific to the endline evaluation.

Evaluation Questions	Tool to be used
1. What are the changes in FSL skills for kinder to grade 3 learners after three years of the Gabay intervention?	EGRA FSL
2. What are the changes in English reading skills for grade 2 and grade 3 learners after three years of the Gabay intervention?	EGRA FSL
3. What are the changes in kinder and grade 1 learners' letter identification skills after three years of the Gabay intervention?	EGRA FSL
4. What is the relationship between learners' scores on FSL subtasks and English reading subtasks?	EGRA FSL
5. Did the Gabay project have a positive impact on learners' ability to communicate with peers and family members?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary caregiver (PCG) questionnaire • PCG Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) • Classroom observation • Teacher questionnaire • Learner participatory activities (LPAs)
6. What contextual factors or other classroom measures are predictors of learners' FSL and reading outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EGRA FSL, • Teacher questionnaire • Classroom Observation
<p>7. To ensure sustainability of program outcomes, what resources are needed for the DepEd to continue and build on the following areas.</p> <p>a. Learning resource materials that Gabay provided;</p> <p>b. Involvement and assistance of Deaf Professionals within their area as Mentors or Trainers on Filipino Sign Language;</p> <p>c. Skills development of parents and families in learning sign language.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCG questionnaire • PCG FGDs • Teacher questionnaire • Classroom Observations

Before the field administration, endline Data Collectors' Training was conducted. Its goal was to train operational enumerators administer the EGRA, classroom observation, parent/caregiver focus group discussions and questionnaire, teacher questionnaire, and learners' participatory activities for the endline data collection phase of the Gabay project.

After the training, participants were expected to understand the content and purpose of each data collection tool, navigate through Tangerine and SurveyCTO with basic fluency, understand research ethics, consent, and safeguarding considerations, fluidly administer EGRA, questionnaires, and classroom observation, including managing tablet and paper stimuli simultaneously for EGRA subtasks, and understand their roles and responsibilities, including data collection quotas and schedules.

II- Development of the Tools

The specific types of tools used in the endline evaluation activities are the following:

1. FSL-EGRA
2. Teachers Questionnaire
3. Parents and Caregivers Questionnaire
4. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
5. Learners Participatory activities
6. Classroom Observation Tool

FSL-EGRA tool already existed as being used during baseline. STS, Gabay, DepEd, and the different organizations serving deaf children were involved during the adaptation of the tool last November of 2019. This was pretested and piloted last February 10-21, 2020 prior baseline and will be the same tool to be used during endline. It targeted 175 learners K-G3 in the endline and consisted 8 subtasks of FSL assessment and English reading assessment. Each test took 30-45 minutes per student. STS programmed FSL EGRA through Tangerine app for scoring, while presented the students stimuli through powerpoint presentations in the tablet and hard bound/laminated paper. These will be administered via in-person to Deaf children enrolled in Kinder to Grade 3 from the three project sites of Batangas, Sorsogon, and Southern Leyte for the cross-sectional and longitudinal designs of comparison.

Other tools: *(i) Teachers Questionnaire; (ii) Parents and Caregivers Questionnaire; (iii) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs); and (iv) Learners Participatory activities* were adapted from the qualitative tools used during the midline evaluation. STS developed these tools with Gabay data inputs, recommendations, comments and final review. Gabay led translations to local languages, including Tagalog, Cebuano, and FSL, as applicable especially for parents and caregivers' administrations. STS encoded questionnaire into SurveyCTO, and created final Word versions of FGD and participatory activity guides for enumerators which will be submitted and stored in the assigned and appropriate dropbox for STS access. All these tools included consent of respondents before proceeding to the actual administration.

The *PCG and Teacher Questionnaires* were pretested and used during the midline and modified as appropriate for the endline. Teacher questionnaire consists of 42 close-ended questions and often lasted 30-45 minutes per teacher. This tool will be administered to all trained SPED teachers of the selected 26 schools. While the PCG questionnaire has 31 close-ended questions and often lasted 30-40 minutes per parent. This latter tool will be administered to at least a minimum of three (3) parents or caregivers (PCG) of the deaf learners per school.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) & Learners Participatory Activities (LPAs) were also used during midline, and modified as fitting for endline. STS developed these tools and sent to Gabay for review and feedback. Each tool includes items and questions that are directly mapped to the evaluation questions. FGD has 16 open-ended questions and will take up 90 minutes per session. STS has targeted 4-8 PCGs per FGD and there will be three (3) FGDs per site which make it to 9 total FGDs to be conducted. While the LPA has 7 open-ended questions and estimated to take 60 minutes per session. LPA targeted 4-6 learners who are deaf per session. Like FGD, STS required only 3 LPAs per site (9 total). Gabay led the translations of these tools to local languages, like Tagalog, Cebuano, and FSL. Tools are created in final Word versions of FGD and LPA guides. Data Collectors will submit the results to dropbox provided by STS.

For the FGDs, the language to be used is Filipino for Batangas and Sorsogon while Cebuano is for Southern Leyte.

The ***Classroom Observation tool*** is a new tool developed by STS with Gabay inputs on the forms used during classroom monitoring and mentoring for endline. The tool was piloted on March 22-23, 2023 by STS and Gabay. There was a training for two (2) hours via zoom on March 22 for its pilot administration on March 23 for Kinder, Grades 1, 2, and 3 classes (image 1). Special classes for deaf students at Padre Gomez Elementary School were observed for the pilot testing of the tool. Some field observes viewed the observations via Zoom. After feedback and results were submitted, STS conducted analysis to finalize the tool before April 10.



III- Selection of Respondents/Samples and Evaluators

FSL-EGRA tool will be administered via in-person to Deaf children enrolled in Non-graded, Kinder to Grade 3 from the three project sites in Batangas, Sorsogon, and Southern Leyte for the cross-sectional and longitudinal designs of comparison. There are 27 schools out of the 39 schools during baseline which had non-graded, Kinder to Grade 3 students. Deaf children included for endline longitudinal analysis are those children who are part of the baseline EGRA. While new enrollees who are less than one year as well as those who are two to three years under Gabay project but not part of baseline is to be included for cross-sectional comparison and grade level analysis of the baseline and endline learners.

Evaluation team for FSL EGRA consists of a Deaf Professional acting as Enumerator or Assessor and to be assisted by a teacher of the Deaf who is tasked as Scorer during the test.

The latter (Scorer) is not part of the schools that will be tested for endline. There is also a Gabay staff who acts as room guard to ensure nobody is allowed to disrupt the testing. Gabay will ensure that the enumerators and scorers in the baseline will be the same during the endline.

The **Teacher Questionnaire tool** is administered to one to two special education teachers of the deaf per school who were trained and assisted by Gabay. All targeted 27 schools must have teachers interviewed for the questionnaire. The enumerator for the teacher questionnaire are the selected Observers of the classroom sessions for the deaf. Observers are provided with tablets with surveyCTO for direct encoding of responses and submission to STS. Results are to be uploaded when connected to a wifi. Each observer is also assisted with hard-bound and paper document of materials provided by Gabay as reference.

While the **PCG Questionnaire tool** is administered to at least a minimum of three (3) parents or caregivers (PCG) of the deaf learners per school. The PCG questionnaire tool is administered by Gabay staff who are aware of the Gabay services but not direct field coordinators of the area. Responses are encoded directly through tablet- SurveyCTO app and results will be uploaded daily when connected to the internet.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) & Learners Participatory Activities (LPAs) are administered to three (3) selected schools randomly selected by STS in reference to Baseline high, medium and low performing schools. Each FGD and LPA must have a minimum of four (4) parents and learners attending per session.-Overall, there will be three (3) anticipated sessions of FGD and LPA to be conducted per site. To select respondents for family member FGDs, STS and Gabay created selection criteria which include the following:

- Respondent should be responsible for their child's learning at home, and
- Respondent should have received training and/or training materials from Gabay.

STS and Gabay hired external evaluation team of Researchers as facilitators and notetakers of the FGDs and LPAs. For the composition of the evaluation team, there will be three groups (for the 3 sites) of data collectors possessing the competencies cited below:

- a. FGD researcher team(s): one facilitator and one notetaker - do not need FSL; must be experienced in conducting FGDs

- b. LPA researcher team(s): one deaf facilitator and one sign language interpreter as notetaker
– both need FSL fluency

Facilitators are responsible for leading the discussion and determine when to ask follow-up questions, and which follow-up questions to ask. The note takers are responsible for recording live notes during the discussion with as much detail as possible, record non-verbal observations (e.g., laughs, smiles, head nods, head shakes, crossed arms, etc.), and in ensuring that the discussion are audio recorded.

The ***Classroom Observation tool*** will be administered to the selected one teacher's lesson to observe per school. Each team assigned to this activity must have at least one Main Observer and a Sign Language Interpreter. The main observer should have experiences in classroom observations. Gabay suggested that DepEd Regional and Divisions Supervisors will join as Observers as their participations are found to be crucial in the transition phase of Gabay.

The training started on April 10 and ended on April 15, 2023. Below are the schedule of activities according to specific evaluation tools:

1. April 10-12, 2023- FSL EGRA Training of Enumerators
2. April 13-14, 2023- Training of Data Collectors for Questionnaires, LPAs and FGDs
3. April 15, 2023- Training of Classroom Observers

IV- DATA COLLECTORS TRAINING

STS Technical Advisor Ms. Aimee Reeves travelled from the US to the Philippines. She facilitated the training via face-to-face which started from April 10 until April 15, 2023.

A. Training of Enumerators for FSL EGRA on April 10-12, 2023

Day I of April 10, 2023 - On the first day, Dr. Quijano welcomed the Baseline enumerators and Gabay presented the different activities and interventions conducted for three years after baseline. Ms. Reeves reviewed the importance of early grade reading and led the discussion of the rationale of the study. She refreshed the group on the basics of EGRA instrument administration.

Ms. Reeves provided overview on Gabay EGRA evaluation study, specifically on intervention areas, population samples, and research design, and questions were elicited. She also shared some baseline results and how the tool has been developed and administered last baseline assessment.



After the introductory sessions, Ms. Reeves presented the principles and guidelines of research ethics in minimizing risk of harm, obtaining informed assent, protecting anonymity and confidentiality, and being professional by upholding expectations as a representative of USAID, Gabay, and STS. She further shared on the founding principles of research ethics, and consent and assent which shall be give prior to the start of the research activity.

She reminded that since children are involved, it is a must to have consent from those of legal age and assent of PCGs if not of legal age. Working with children requires the assent of the parent or legal guardian and consent of the subject of legal age. In EGRA, Enumerator will sign in FSL the statement on the tablet asking students to give their assent to participate. Scorers will mark assent in Tangerine in order to proceed to subtasks. She debriefed the trainees on tips and techniques for enumeration, gaining cooperation, and building rapport with the child.

She explained that within three (3) days, (i) enumerators understand the content and purpose of the sign language and English reading components of the EGRA; (ii) enumerators can navigate through Tangerine on the tablet with basic fluency; (iii.) enumerators agree on acceptable responses and regional variations on items from all subtasks; (iv) enumerators can fluidly conduct their tasks on the assessment, managing tablet and paper stimuli simultaneously; and (v) enumerators know and follow rules for each subtask and the assessment.



She then again re-introduced Tangerine application. Trainees were already oriented on how to start the tangerine and are familiar with its navigation as they all used the same tool three years ago through scoring and synching results. Then, trainees were provided opportunities to maneuver

the program as tablets were distributed to each one of them for the purpose of practicing.

She gave an overview of the tool for Sign Language Assessment and English Reading Assessment. In the afternoon, FSL assessment was reintroduced and its four (4) subtasks which include: Receptive and Expressive Vocabulary, and FSL Comprehensions Levels 1 and 2. Below are the details of the refresher discussions with the Deaf Assessors and Teachers of the deaf in terms of scoring, subtask rules, and regional variations;

Table 31. EGRA Administration Rules & Protocols

Subtasks	What does it measure?	Why is it important?	How it will be administered?	Number of Items/Rules
Receptive Vocabulary	Measures students' receptive comprehension of common vocabulary words	Measures students; receptive vocabulary skills. Vocabulary knowledge is an indicator of language development that can be used in a first language and as a basis for learning in a second language.	The enumerator produces a sign (live) 2x. The student looks at four pictures on the tablet. The child points to the picture that corresponds to the sign he/she saw. The scorer records the student's response on a tablet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 items • Stimuli on tablet required • Autostop: 10 consecutive items • Show the sign in FSL 2x • 5 second rule
Expressive Vocabulary	Measures students' ability	The ability to produce signs is	The student looks at a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 items

Subtasks	What does it measure?	Why is it important?	How it will be administered?	Number of Items/Rules
	to produce the sign for common vocabulary words	critical for students to communicate and acquire FSL and other content (e.g. math). Vocabulary knowledge is an indicator of language development that can be used in a first language and as a basis for learning in a second language.	picture on the tablet. The student produces the sign that corresponds to the picture. The scorer records the student's response on a tablet (FSL or ASL).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimuli on tablet required • Autostop: 10 consecutive items • Scorer can accept FSL or ASL sign as correct; home signs or invented signs should be marked incorrect • 5 second rule
FSL Comprehension Level 1	Measures students' ability to understand FSL grammar and comprehend a story	The ability to understand stories is fundamental to the development of any other knowledge/skill and one of the most important goals of sign language acquisition	The enumerator signs one sentence of a story 2x. After the sentence, the enumerator signs a comprehension question to the student 2x. The student responds to the comprehension question. The scorer records the student's response on a tablet. Repeat process for the rest of the story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 story • 5 sentences • 5 comprehension questions • No stimuli • No autostop • Sign sentence 2x and comprehension question 2x • 10 second rule
FSL Comprehension Level 2			The enumerator signs one sentence of a story 2x.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 story • 5 comprehension questions • No stimuli

Subtasks	What does it measure?	Why is it important?	How it will be administered?	Number of Items/Rules
			After the story, the enumerator signs 5 comprehension questions to the student 2x each. The student responds to the comprehension questions. The scorer records the student's response on a tablet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No autostop Sign sentence 2x and comprehension question 2x 10 second rule



Ms. Reeves presented the saved videos from the baseline for easy reference and they could look at the signs and how they administer to the learners who are deaf. They reviewed the powerpoint stimuli of the learners for receptive and expressive, including the enumerators help, instructions, and items. They had group

work to standardize instructions by grade and team demonstration in front of other groups for feedbacking and comments.

Day 2 of April 11, 2023 - On the second day of FSL EGRA Training, Ms. Reeves reintroduced the English Reading Assessment. She reiterated the purpose which was to determine the changes in reading skills for grade 2 and grade 3 learners after three years of the Gabay interventions, and also the changes in grade 1 learners' letter identification skills over the course of three years. This 2nd type of test will be administered to K to Grade 1 for letter identification subtask, and all subtasks to Grade 1 up to Grade 3. This has four subtasks components which are Letter Name Identification, Fingerspelling Reproduction, Familiar Word Reading, and Sentence Reading Comprehension. Discussions included what does each subtask measure, why it is important, how it will be administered and the number of items.



Ms. Reeves facilitated the English Reading practices. She tackled each subtask, understanding and performing demonstration practices. Ms. Reeves showed different baseline videos or codebooks, and FSL dictionary to have same understanding on the sign language used. If its FSL or ASL, manual coded signs, or home signs which should be ticked incorrect in the scoring.

The three (3) pairs spent the afternoon on practices by having Gabay staff as sample students (image 6) since the field practice will be scheduled on the 3rd day of the training at Commonwealth Elementary School, Division of Quezon City, NCR.



Ms. Reeves discussed school visit for the next day and to make sure that all students have been assessed, their names must be written in the school verification form provided. Same with baseline, they must also note any assessment issues that occurred like missing data, incomplete assessments, etc. and record them on the school verification form.



Day 3 of April 12, 2023 - On the third day of FSL EGRA Training, the team travelled early to Commonwealth ES. Although it was not too far from the training site, the team had to go back in the afternoon for feedbacking and more practice. Enumerators had sufficient time to practice in the schools. These provided opportunities for enumerators to practice and refresh themselves in a realistic (school) setting with deaf children who are using sign language.

After the field practices, enumerators and Gabay were regrouped at the training venue for a feedback session on their experiences. There were reflections on what went well, mistakes made, and areas for improvement. These provided a chance for facilitators to give more feedback to the group and for trainee-assessors to raise concerns and ask questions about the challenges they faced during the field practices. Among the concerns discussed are:

1. Child who had additional disabilities. It was agreed not to include him/her if the child won't respond appropriately to consent.

2. Child who said yes to assessment but could not sustain his/her focus. The team shared strategies to get back the child's attention. It is also ok if the child requested to pee and the assessment had to be paused and the scorer can take note of this.
3. The positioning of the tablet must allow enough lighting; the child must be comfortable on his seat before starting the test.
4. The question if the child has a family member who is deaf should be asked in advance to the teacher, including the correct data on age, and grade level before starting the test.
5. Agreements on the child and enumerators wearing of mask as protocol requirement.
6. Deaf Enumerator and Scorer should have good coordination and communication gestures or signals to slow down or pause a bit, especially when scorer has to look at the enumerator signing, to the child, and to the tablet.
7. Scorers and Enumerators should make judgement when to move to the next level if 5 seconds no response lapses.
8. Enumerator should also introduce the scorer beside him/her even if not in the script.

For actual assessments, Ms. Reeves reminded the team to determine if a follow-up visit needs to be conducted to assess students who were absent/unavailable. They had demonstration practices on every stimulus on the remaining two (2) hours before Ms. Reeves concluded the EGRA FSL training. Ms. Reeves also conducted oral test on the rules for every subtask through games for the retention of the enumerators. Then they practiced the full EGRA in teams, study protocols and student verification forms, and reviewed cheat sheet and rules.

At the end of the day, Gabay pre-briefed the EGRA team for the planned field EGRA test. They were instructed to wear presentable, comfortable and non-overly printed dresses or polo shirts for boys so as not to distract the Deaf child during assessment. It is also a must that enumerators should not take photos or videos showing the child faces for the purpose of posting in the internet. Gabay prepared all the logistics and materials.

B. Training of Data Collectors for Questionnaires, LPAs and FGDs on April 13-14, 2023

Another preliminary and brief opening was conducted before the actual training started because the training sessions had another set of data collectors to join Gabay staff. Dr. Quijano welcomed the set of participants who were with Gabay during midline, plus classroom observers. Gabay presented the updates since midline and what were the activities conducted as a product of midterm evaluation. Ms. Reeves was reintroduced and she explained the midterm activities and coming endline activities. These data collectors were both involved in qualitative and quantitative data collections. For qualitative, there were focus group discussions or FGDs and learners' participatory activities or LPAs. For quantitative, there was a teacher questionnaire and parent or caregiver (PCG) questionnaire.



The training was conducted for them to get refreshed and be updated on what's new with the Gabay project after midline and how it would be different in the endline. The pairs who would be facilitating FGDs and some data collectors on LPAs were part of the midline, so most were familiar with the content and purpose of each tool.

Ms. Reeves reiterated that midline researchers can discuss themselves on the qualitative research techniques, including prompts and notetaking by experiences. Before dividing the qualitative and quantitative groups, she explained the research ethics, consent/assent, and safeguarding considerations.

The groups were divided into two. Ms. Reeves facilitated the FGD and LPA group by reviewing protocols, guides and consent. While Gabay and Consultants were in the separate room to discuss the teacher and parent questionnaire by item



Ms. Reeves emphasized the quantitative data collection techniques on sticking to scripts, distributed the tablets and reviewed SurveyCTO. She recommended to note all comments and STS US will respond to these and make revisions as necessary especially on translations. Participants were able to practice and review the teacher’s and parent’s questionnaires in pairs.

STS reminded during the training that the evaluation team must obtain verbal consent/assent from all respondents to participate in the discussion and to have the discussion audio and/or video recorded. If any respondents do not consent/assent, they can leave the discussion. STS also emphasized the child safeguarding measures and data confidentiality. Gabay ensured that external evaluators were oriented and signed the RBI Safeguarding Policy and Pledge of Confidentiality prior to the conduct of the field activities.

The number of hours spent for each respondent for the FGDs and LPAs were dependent on how many respondents and how responsive they were on each question. However, it would mostly take 40 minutes to 1 hour.

By experience, the FGD facilitators requested to ensure extra parents at least a minimum of four (4) because some parents may not appear during actual administration. Some attendees were not also primary caregivers of the child so most answers include “I don’t know”, “I’m not familiar”, and the likes.

Data Collectors on the quantitative spent the afternoon navigating the tablet and taking turns to ask and act as teacher or parents. The team had also recommended revisions on translations which were shared to STS via email for Survey CTO updating. The LPA group was also discussing and studying the process by taking turns as learners. While the FGD group was discussing the language translations: Tagalog for Batangas and Sorsogon, and Cebuano for Southern Leyte. Before the session ends in the afternoon, Gabay shared the logistics on the next day for school practice at Lian Central School, Batangas.

On the second day of qualitative and quantitative training, the team was distributed in the two vans and travelled early at 6am to Lian Central School, Division of Batangas which estimated 3 hours’ distance from the training venue. The school was communicated in advance three (3) weeks before for approval of the Division officials and preparation of parents and students.

There was only one trained teacher of the deaf at the school, so one data collector asked while others listened. But all of them utilized tablets to encode all answers. While the PCG questionnaire was tried out to a parent and noted identified concerns during feedbacking.



There were two simultaneous LPAs conducted at Lian Central School since the two pairs of facilitators were not part of the midline.



There was one FGD session conducted at the school. One pair acted as facilitator and notetaker while others were taking notes and did the observations.



After practices, Ms. Reeves instructed to gather per group and discussed lessons learned, comments, and recommendations.



Below are the recorded discussions during the feedbacking:

1. Teacher and PCG Questionnaires

- Pictures of the Gabay materials must be provided as reference to non-Gabay evaluators.
- To add options in the highest level of school attended by the teacher in the options for continuing education, e.g. with Masteral units (not yet completed)
- STS to provide rubrics for Beginner, Intermediate, and Advance for self-assessment of the teacher on her/his knowledge on FSL
- Using “you” instead of “I” in the series of questions pertaining to how much the teacher agrees with the statements
- Discussions on ‘if it is necessary to take note/additional comments on these type of options: strongly agree and so on... ‘This is to also acknowledge teachers’ reasons.
- Double entry on some options
- In the PCG questionnaire, there was Cebuano incorporated in the Tagalog translations.

2. LPA

- Suggestions on modifying questions and initiate strategies if children have limited signs for them to understand
- Produce pictures of school, teacher, family, friends, home as supporting tool when children have limited signs, and children are so visual
- Ms. Aimee suggested to practice more and improve to get more information.

- Students seems to not understand, but just nodding their heads so visual support is necessary.
- Give the child something to react to extract more information like whys
- Facilitator and Notetaker should be comfortable with each other and create signals for easy flow of the sessions.
- Ensure camera and stand should be present per session. This was to have a recorded data when the notetaker needs to look back at expressions.
- Be cautious on the positioning of the camera

3. FGD

- Ensure audio recorder is present and consented by parents
- Secure quiet place to conduct FGD and parents are comfortable. In the recent venue, most parents were disturbed with the too much heat by the sun, electric fan could not provide enough ventilation and people are working in the surroundings.
- Guarantee the presence of primary caregivers, and not someone as proxy or alternate who were not trained or attended the needs of the child
- Invite at least minimum of 4 parents for better engagements and those who joined Gabay activities. In the actual day, some parents may be absent so at least a minimum of 4 can ensure the conduct of the sessions.
- Provide pictures of Gabay materials since some parents have forgotten the title of the materials. Something to show and let them point would be easy and time saving.

C. Training of Classroom Observers on April 15, 2023

The training on the classroom observation tool was conducted on April 15, 2023 beginning 8am until 12nn. There was no longer acknowledgement of participants in the 3rd training, because the selected Classroom Observers were already present during quantitative training and acted as teacher interviewer as well in the previous day's activity. Ms. Reeves emphasized the purpose of the tool, its context and set-up and consent needed.



Ms. Reeves tackled the classroom observation tool and discussed with the team to obtain same understanding and discover any hesitations or questions per item. Below are the notable discussed items during the 4-hour training:

1. Everyone should have the same understanding on the type of classroom setup in the Philippines as explained by Dr. Quijano;
2. Put “Gender not listed” as option in the teacher’s gender;
3. Since the observations will be in special class, hearing learners can be removed and put nondisabled learners instead, and add other disabilities;
4. Be cautious on the observation start and end time;
5. Note if the word chart with sign language and pictures present are ASL or FSL;
6. Revise “Ask to see the teacher’s lesson plan. Does the lesson plan include Gabay Lesson Plan content?” than just observing if the lesson plan was of Gabay;
7. The comment is a must on the teacher practices during lesson;
8. Instead of choosing between simple yes and no, revise the tool by specifying yes, always and yes, sometimes to determine the frequency;
9. In learners’ activities during lesson, add phrase “in at least one activity” to Learners use the learning materials provided by the Gabay program;

10. Provide visual representations of the technologies introduced by Gabay for easy references; and
11. Clarify what does “assisting” the teacher during the lesson comprises of in the duration of the lesson.

V- Observations/Recommendations

Hiring the same people during baseline and endline really helped the training run smoothly. Facilitator will just need to refresh everyone and with one school practice they were refreshed with the techniques on how to conduct the sessions. Another advantage was the familiarity of the actual scenarios and they will apply the lessons learned from previous experiences.

FSL EGRA needs the same enumerators to ensure the same dosage will be applied from baseline and their level of confidence in conducting the test might be higher in comparison with the new ones.

The same people of researchers for FGDs will also sustain the momentum of comparison in both midline and endline data collections. While the majority of LPA facilitators and notetakers were new, this would also help to apply a different approach of extracting information from students. So overall, no identified challenges were raised to the hired people to administer the tools.

For the teacher questionnaire, it was helpful if the interviewer was familiar with Gabay activities since most questions were connected and easily understood by the direct implementers. However, it will also be a fresh approach when the data collector was non-Gabay like Consultants and RBI personnel. They were aware of Gabay but not deeply into the specific activities. This could be time-consuming for them in administering per item but this would give freedom to the teachers being interviewed to express freely without feeling awkward with the actual Gabay personnel present. To support this case, it was really a plus to provide pictures of the materials provided by Gabay.

The parent questionnaire, however was administered by Gabay personnel. However, the interviewer was not the field coordinator working directly with them. This might provide room for opportunities for the parents to disclose information about Gabay without hesitations.

The six tools to be utilized in the data collections might demand one school per day given the travel time, courtesy visits, and schools' other activities. But Gabay management has the confidence on the evaluation teams' judgement in case issues on this matter arise. Early Grade Reading Assessment Result shall be reported on the 1st Quarter of Year 5 (17th Quarter).

B.12 Monitoring and Technical Assistance Provided

Gabay (Guide): Strengthening Inclusive Education for Blind, Deaf and Deafblind Children the project name suggests has implemented initiatives that pursue the framework of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Although the Framework is designed with every learner in mind, its essence is critically appropriate to learners with disabilities because it believes that individuals learn in different ways and therefore need different strategies to access information and to demonstrate what they know. The principles of UDL encourage educators to support learning in different ways, provide choice and options to assess learning, and consider how to sustain children and young people's motivation and engagement. These principles are complementary to Inclusive Education which affirms that all students attend and welcome by their neighborhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school.



With the resumption of face-to-face classes for SY 2022-2023 after two school years of distance learning, Gabay staff for the first time conducted observations in inclusive classroom to determine the GenEd teachers' capability in; providing the appropriate learning materials needed by the CSDs, using large print, braille or Filipino Sign Language for instructional purposes, and ensuring participation of Children with Sensorial Disabilities together with peers in the activities provided; and describe the learning environment and classroom management prevailing in the inclusion setting.

Table 32. Schools Visited during the monitoring of GenEd and SPED Teachers activities

Division	School	No. Teachers Observed	Type of CSDs Included & No.	Grade Level	Subject
INCLUSION CLASSES					
Batangas City	Batangas City East Elementary School	2	Low Vision (1)	3	Filipino
			Blind (1)	1	Mother Tongue
	Bolbok Elementary School	1	Low Vision (1)	2	Mother Tongue
	Libjo Elementary School	1	Deaf (1)	2	Filipino
	Pinamukan Elementary School	2	Low Vision (1)	1	Mother Tongue
Sorsogon City	Sorsogon East Central School	1	Hard-of-Hearing (1)	1	Mother Tongue
Sorsogon	Tabon-Tabon Elementary School	1	Low Vision (1)	3	Filipino
	Pilar 1 Central School	1	Deaf (1)	3	Filipino
	San Francisco Elementary School	1	Deaf (1)	1	Mother Tongue
	Buenavista Elementary School	1	Deaf (2)	3	Filipino
	Gubat North Central School	1	Low Vision (1)	2	Filipino
SPECIAL CLASSES					
Sorsogon	Barcelona Central Elementary School	1	Blind (2)	Non-Graded	Braille Reading & Writing
	Cumadcad Central Elementary School	1	Blind (2) Low Vision (2)	Non-Graded	Braille Reading & Writing
TOTAL		14 Teachers	19 LSDs LV = 7 Bl = 5 Deaf = 6 HOH = 1		

Among the ten (10) schools visited with inclusion program, four (4 or 40%) are from the Division of Batangas City with six (6 or 50%) teachers observed , one (1 or 10%) is from the Division of Sorsogon City with one (1 or 8.33%) teacher observed , and five (5 or 50%) are from the Division of Sorsogon with five (5 or 41.66%) teachers observed.

Only two (2) schools with special education classes handled by one (1) teacher per class were visited only in the Division of Sorsogon.

Classroom observations were conducted by four (4) Gabay staff using Observation Checklist that has components on i) Fluency on Braille/Large Print/Filipino Sign Language: For Teachers and For Learners, ii) Teacher-Pupil-Peer Interaction, and iii) Learning Environment and Classroom Management.

Division of Batangas

During this pandemic, Gabay had the chance to conduct limited face-to-face school visits and documentations in two School Years: 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. The school visits were conducted on December 3, 2021, March 16-18, 2022 and September 12-16, 2022 in the Divisions of Sorsogon City and Sorsogon; February 22-24, 2022 in the Division of Southern Leyte; and September 5-9, 2022 in the Divisions of Batangas City.

Gabay gathered data and interviewed schools' heads and parents through group discussions and one-on-one methods, and observed SPED and GenEd teachers during their classes. With these, there were identified needs and concerns of every school. Although training and distribution of Learning Resource Materials (LRMs) really worked well in the project sites, there were still recommendations to further serve Children with Sensorial Disabilities. First, medical support which Gabay addressed by conducting vision and hearing screening in the areas cited. Gabay has been working on linkages for medical intervention and connected with the Eye and Ear Specialists in the areas for diagnosis. Low Vision assessments were likewise conducted. Gabay also requested Parents Advocate for Children with Visually Impaired Children (PAVIC) and the Provincial/City Social Welfare Development Offices (P/CSWDOs) in the project sites for the needed therapy support of most children with sensorial disabilities and orthopedic impairments.



Second, schools also requested additional training for new administrators and receiving teachers on which Gabay coordinated with the Divisions for their incoming semestral break-in-service orientations and training. In many cases, these were addressed by some schools. The Gabay trained teachers and School Heads themselves allotted schedules and budget for school-based training to orient the receiving teachers and those in the barrio schools. But on another type of training, specifically on multiple disabilities, this was also addressed by the face-to-face training last July 2022 through Perkins Specialist who demonstrated to the teachers how to handle children with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and those with multiple handicaps.

The requested training on Filipino Sign Language (FSL) was also arranged by the Deaf Mentors last August 2-12 2022. Teachers also mentioned additional materials like manipulative toys and video lessons. Gabay suggested that these can be addressed by the schools and must be included in the DepEd SPED fund budget. Gabay is currently working on FSL stories to provide instructional materials on video lessons on the development of reading skills.

The last request was the monitoring and mentoring of teachers. Teachers exclaimed during the visit that they were handling many multigrade students with different disabilities. Other concerns were the high number of overage learners, children with multiple disabilities and parental support. Most teachers of the children with sensorial disabilities handled other learners like those with orthopedic and learning disabilities, and in different levels and ranges of cognitive development. Some of them even felt they lack strategies in dealing with these learners.

In Sorsogon, with the visits of Gabay, led by COP, Dr. Yolanda Quijano, she met with the School Heads, District and Division Supervisors and explained the program placement and suggested appropriate program delivery for the education of children with disabilities. With Gabay's extended services this year, Gabay is hopeful to conduct other visits to the Divisions of Batangas and Southern Leyte to assist the program and services concerns for Children with Sensorial Disabilities and observe teachers' lessons in classes.

With the planned activities in Batangas in November 2022, classroom observations together with Gabay consultant-specialists for the education of children with sensorial disabilities were incorporated. Gabay requested the divisions and school heads to observe at least one session with the students who are deaf and blind in the resource rooms and/or regular classes.

The main purpose of this activity was to provide the School Heads and teachers with the necessary information and recommendations on how to improve access and the delivery of quality instruction to CSDs through classroom monitoring and data gathering.

A total of nine (9) schools were visited and sixteen (16) classroom observations were conducted. Of the 16 class sessions, six (6) were classes of blind students and ten (10) classes of deaf learners.

In many schools, several teachers and school heads remain oblivious of their responsibilities in responding to the right of children with sensorial disabilities to education and appeared to be illiterate of international and local laws that mandate this right. This situation implies that it will take years to make the schools and society fully ready for inclusion. But Gabay cannot wait until everyone can be perfectly ready. It is striding small steps using the principles of collaboration and cooperation with the sense of accountability that starts among government officials and shared by international and local organizations which have commitment for this sector.

With the positive actions being made by DepEd at the national and regional levels along with the strong leadership of the Division officials who are able to successful engage the LGUs' support, students with sensorial disabilities with their families have hopes that access to quality education will keep on improving. Gabay on its last year of implementation carries on its mission of providing technical assistance to schools to influence the minds and hearts of implementors so that inclusive education can take roots in some schools – to be models of inspiration for “all children with disabilities afforded their right to education”.

Division of Sorsogon

The classroom observations in Batangas last November 2021 and Sorsogon last September 2022 revealed a need for speedy catching up of lessons for the learners with sensorial disabilities. Most of them were stuck on the Kindergarten learning competencies of the curriculum even if the learners are now in higher grade levels.

The identified factors were not just about the two years pandemic, but also the limited teaching strategies at home employed by parents; limited time with the SPED teachers; and learners' motivations due to limited accessible learning resource materials. There might be other reasons depending on the sites and schools.

The classroom observations and mentoring activities showed different cases of learners that resulted in challenges, and considerations for the improvement of the quality of classroom services for children with sensorial disabilities (CSDs) in the Gabay project sites.

In some schools, several teachers and school heads remain oblivious of their responsibilities in responding to the right to education of children with sensorial disabilities and appeared to have limited knowledge of international and local laws that mandate this right. But seeing how the inclusion challenges have been addressed by the implementers at the school and community level, and positive actions being made by officials and staff of DepEd and LGUs, students with sensorial disabilities with their families have hope. The access to quality education will keep on improving as Gabay carries on its mission on providing technical assistance to schools, and influence the minds and hearts of implementers on inclusive education.

Now that schools have the in-person classes, Gabay visited the remaining schools in the Divisions of Sorsogon, Batangas, Maasin City and Southern Leyte to observe classes for CSDs through the assistance of Gabay Consultants.

With same purposes and objectives with the previous classroom observations, Gabay worked to achieve the following:

1. Conduct classroom observations and provide appropriate suggestions as needed to the teachers and school heads;
2. Identify pending concerns of the schools and teachers on the educational programs for children with sensorial disabilities and provide recommendations;
3. Promote empowerment of the teachers with renewed motivations to teach and utilize the appropriate accommodations and modifications on their teaching strategies among their learners; and
4. Gain awareness on their internal and external accountability of the resources provided by USAID through Gabay.

Gabay staff in-charge of the sites coordinated with the Division and School Officials for the schedule of the visits prior to the activity. Gabay team was composed of consultant-specialists and staff. For the two (2) classroom observations of the Blind and Low vision, Ms. Maui Gabriel, a Preschool Teacher and Deafblind Specialist conducted the observations and led the team with other two (2) Gabay staff. While the team for classroom observations of the deaf learners was composed of the following: Dr. Yolanda Quijano, Gabay Chief of Party; Dr. Mirla Olores, former chief of Special Education Division, DepEd Bureau of Elementary Education; Mr. Justine Barcenas, Mr. Ryan Clint Marcaida, and Mr. Omar Emata as Deaf Mentors who were joined by a professional Sign Language Interpreter, Mr. Mark Jayobo; and Ms. Joy Magsubar, Gabay Field Manager, and Ms. Cristina Labastida, Sorsogon Field Coordinator.

A total of seven (7) schools were visited and observed last January 31 to February 2, 2023 with nine (9) observations conducted. There were two schools which two observations were carried out. Of the nine (9) class sessions, two (2) were conducted in the inclusion classes and seven (7) in special class set-up. Among these nine (9) observations, two (2) were classes for blind/low vision students and seven (7) were for deaf learners.

Gabay also visited the class for the blind learners. It was not a whole class session but Consultant was able to observe some of the lessons.

They had the same lesson as the deaf class on common words starting with the letter “L”. The blind student was also blending with the other children with disabilities like DS, and IDs. There was mentoring on how to guide blind learners to easy and comfortable writing technique using slate and stylus. The Consultants suggested to the School Head that older children with no other disabilities but being blind and deaf should be in the inclusion program supported by the SPED teachers. The school had two (2) blind learners who are both 16 years old but still non-graded, and other two (2) blind who are 6 and 8 years old and both in Kindergarten.

Divisions of Maasin City and Southern Leyte

With similar objectives in Sorsogon, Gabay visited a total 10 schools in Southern Leyte last February 17, 20-23, 2023. Among these schools, a total of 15 classroom observations were conducted for the classes of the blind, low vision, and deaf. Of the 15 class sessions, only one (1) was conducted in the inclusion program and 14 in special class set-up. Five (5) were classes for blind/low vision students and 10 were classes for deaf learners.

Gabay team was composed of Consultant-Specialists and staff. For the five (5) classroom observations for the blind and low vision learners, these were conducted by the following:

1. Dr. Mirla Olores, former chief of Special Education Division, DepEd Bureau of Elementary Education (2 observations);
2. Ms. Adelaida Elamparo, RBI Consultant for the Blind Education (1 observation via Zoom); and
3. Ms. Amy Mojica, Deputy Chief of Party & Ms. Maui Gabriel, a Preschool Teacher and Deafblind Specialist conducted the two (2) observations and led the team with other two (2) Gabay staff.

For the 10 classroom observations of the deaf learners, the Team was composed of the following:

1. Dr. Yolanda Quijano, Gabay Chief of Party (3 observations);
2. Dr. Mirla Olores (7 observations);
3. Deaf Mentor: Mr. Justine Barcenas who was joined by a professional Sign Language Interpreter Mr. Mark Jayobo (7 observations); and
4. Ms. Joy Magsubar, Gabay Field Manager, and Ms. Cristina Labastida, Sorsogon Field Coordinator.

See Annex for Monitoring of Schools Report

C. INTERMEDIATE RESULT 3

Improved local government attention to the needs of children with sensorial disabilities

- Disability Sensitivity Awareness Orientation to 111 Focal Key Persons in the 3 provinces covered by Gabay
- Gabay-Synergeia Partnership
 - Focus Group Discussions for the Program and Services Supporting the Education of Children with Sensorial Disabilities to 207 members of the Local School Boards and community stakeholders from 6 municipalities of the 3 provinces covered by Gabay
 - Exposure Visit and Training to Improve Programs for Children with Disabilities for 36 Local School Board Members and community stakeholders from 6 municipalities of the 3 provinces covered by Gabay

C.1 Disability Sensitivity and Awareness Orientation (DSAO) for Focal Key Persons in the Provinces of Batangas, Sorsogon, and Southern Leyte

Gabay aims to support RA 10070 and to equip LGU Focal Persons in the project sites by providing access to information in strengthening the services for children with sensorial disabilities despite the COVID-19 challenges and restrictions.

For its more than three (3) years of implementation, several Disability Sensitivity Awareness and Orientation (DSAO) were conducted. In Batangas, there were 12 out of 30 municipalities that haven't been reached yet by Gabay in terms of training DPOs, PDAOs and LGU for DSAO. Therefore, Gabay chose to conduct DSAO to gather representatives from the 12 municipalities that have less than two (2) representatives from the previous trainings for this area. Gabay will also expand its invitations in the two municipalities of Sorsogon that did not participate in any Gabay training yet, and opened the invitations to all municipalities of Southern Leyte Province.

The DSAO's objectives were to i) raise awareness of issues faced by people with disabilities; to develop a thorough understanding of appropriate and effective ways of interaction with blind, deaf, and deaf-blind children; and ii) establish an inclusive environment by having an increased knowledge in sensorial disabilities, children's rights, local government policies and services; and to generate plans of actions and policy issuances among service providers to meet the needs of blind and deaf children.

DSAO utilized the Disability Sensitivity Awareness Training Module developed by Gabay various topics including the following:

1. Understanding Persons with Sensorial Disabilities
 - a. Blind and Low Vision
 - b. Deaf and Hard of Hearing
2. Rights of Children
3. Orientation on Legal Basis and Local Government policies to support and promote services for children with sensorial disabilities

Table 33. Participants during Disability Sensitivity Awareness and Orientation

Designation	BATANGAS PROVINCE		SORSOGON PROVINCE		SO. LEYTE PROVINCE		TOTAL		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Municipal Vice Mayor	1						1		1
Municipal Councilors/ Sangguniang Bayan (SB) Members Committee on Education	1		3				4		4
MSWDO Head		4		3		5		12	12
PDAO Focal	2	2			2		4	2	6
PWD President & Other Officers	1	5	1			1	2	6	8
Community Leaders	5	63		1	2	3	7	67	74
Optometrist		1						1	1
Admin		3	1	1			1	4	5
TOTAL	10	78	5	5	4	9	19	92	111

There were 111 participants in the activity. Eighty-eight (88) or 79.28% were from Batangas, ten (10) or 9% from Sorsogon, and thirteen (13) or 11.71% were from Southern Leyte.

Of the total 111 participants reached by Gabay, 74 or 66% were community leaders which consist of barangay leaders, community health workers officers, appointed field midwives and nurses assigned in the different barangays, sanitation head, and other rural workers whom residents are familiar with in their towns.

There were 12 or 10.81% attendees who were mostly Municipal Social Welfare Development Heads and six (6) or 5.4% PDAO Focal Person. The PWD President and some Officers also attended with eight (8) or 7.2% in numbers. Five (5) or 4.5% are admin officers of the mayor's offices, while one (1) or .9% was an optometrist of the health unit.

Fortunately, there were higher ranking officials who attended the training whom speaker Mr. Ronnel was able to ask for programs and services. These were the Municipal Councilors and Sangguniang Bayan Board Members of Batangas and Sorsogon Municipalities. There were four (4) of them or 3.6% who joined the discussions. The training was also graced with the presence of the Municipal Vice Mayor of Padre Garcia Batangas, Hon. Micko Angelo Rivero.

Of the total 111, 19 or 17.12% were males, and 92 or 82.9% were females. Most importantly the activity was attended by the 11 self- advocates or the people with disabilities of the three (3) sites.

Table 34. Participants during Disability Sensitivity Awareness and Orientation on August 23, 2022 with disabilities

Gabay Sites	Orthopedic Disability	Psycho-social	Physical Disability	Deaf	Visual Disability	TOTAL
Batangas Province	4	1	1	1	2	9
Sorsogon Province	1					1
So. Leyte Province	1					1
TOTAL	6	1	1	1	2	11

Of the 11 PWDs attended, six (6) or 54.54% are orthopedically impaired, two (2) or 18.18% are with visual disability, while one (1) or 9% representatives with psychosocial, deafness and with physical disability.

Discussion/Highlights

RBI Executive Director, Ms. Amelia Torrente welcomed the participants and Officials for the orientation by encouraging partnerships and collaboration. She quoted, *“Great things are never done by one person, they’re done by a team of people. Our partnership and collaboration make things possible.”*



This was followed by the heartwarming special number performed by blind and deaf learners of Batangas City and Province, and Maasin City were shown to give additional inspirations to the participants.

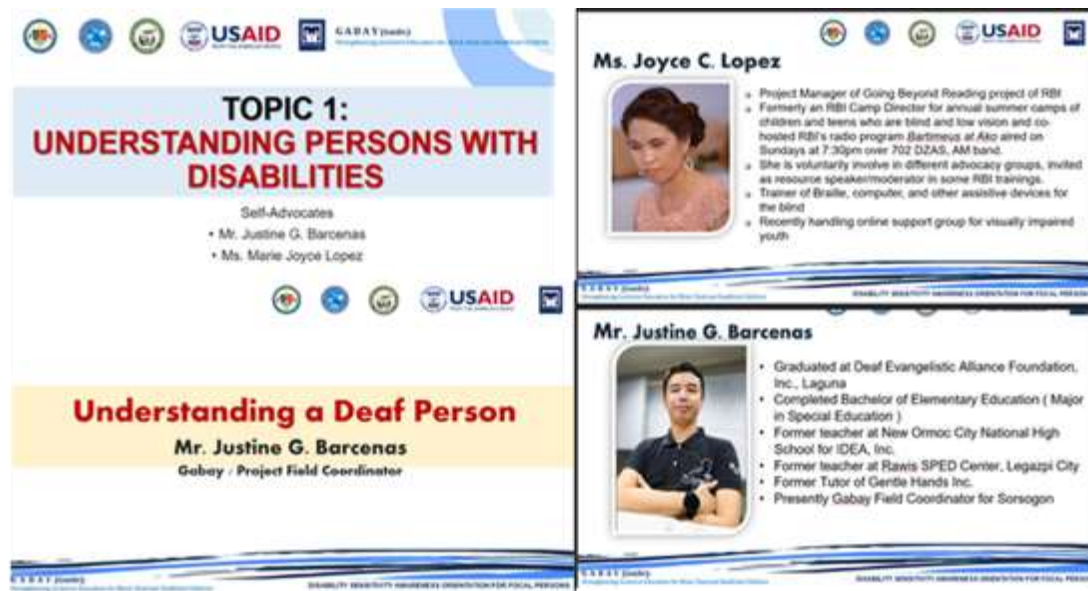


Dr. Oscar Eleuterio Bejasa, former Executive Assistant to the Governor of Batangas Province and now a Provincial Health Officer I of the Province of Batangas gave his Special Message. He promoted the involvement of officials to ensure the services to people with disabilities will be continuously given importance and he shared Batangas activities as one of the good practices.



Gabay Chief of Party provided an overview of the project, objectives of the orientation. She briefed the participants about the project Gabay goals, targets and intermediate results. She provided information on Gabay support to LGUs.





Subsequently, the first topic for DSAO sessions proper was on *“Understanding Persons with Disabilities”* which were discussed by Professional Blind and Deaf, Ms. Joyce Lopez and Mr. Justine Barcenas, respectively who shared their personal testimonies and imparted about the misconceptions, courtesy rules of blindness and culture of the deaf (image.5). They clarified different misconceptions about blindness and deafness. They discussed how a person could help when encountering deaf and blind persons, their interests and concepts/ideas that are often misinterpreted by hearing and sighted persons.

With the games included in the 1st topic, many participants were responsive and attentive through unmuting and messaging in the chat box. Some participants were uncertain with the question if all sign languages are the same around the world and around the Philippines, on which Mr. Barcenas explained that it was false and there were variations of sign languages not just per nation but even in regions just like the mother tongues or dialects of the region. Mr. Barcenas also clarified that deaf people can also drive or be allowed to own a car as long as the Deaf took all necessary precautions and passed the requirements. While Ms. Lopez reiterated that Blind people are the same with typical or regular people in terms of senses and it doesn’t mean that they have higher sense of hearing as some participants suspected. It was just they used it most of the time so most blind people have active or sensitive hearing sense. Ms. Lopez also emphasized that facing blind people and talking to them directly is of utmost importance than facing their guide person.



The second and third topics, “*Children’s Rights*” and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability were discussed by Ms. Lopez with her experiences as an advocate for children with disabilities. She deliberated the issue on rights of children and expounded more contents in the Philippine setting. She shared her experiences on working with other groups to ensure the information were communicated to the participants.



The succeeding topic was about the LGU Policies to support and promote services for Persons with Disability. This was explained by a Blind Advocate, Mr. Ronnel Del Rio on the topic. He called out the Officials present in the orientation, especially the Board Members of the different municipalities of the different Provinces on the different good practices of the LGU policies.

He cited the different examples of good LGU Practices for PWDs. He mentioned the preventive services like what Gabay is already engaged in like information dissemination on disability prevention, enhancing capabilities of the CHWs in early detection, promoting eye and ear screening, and referral system. He also pointed out the different restorative services which could help the PWDs like provision of assistive devices, consistent and clear flow of referral for medical intervention like surgery for cataract patients, and provision of counseling services.

He encouraged the officials to improve the rehabilitative services of the LGUs like providing counselling to PWDs, Orientation & Mobility, Sign Language training, and organize self-help PWD organizations in the community, and even empower parents of the PWDs as advocates through orientation and training and employment support services. The Officials likewise discussed their existing services and planned services for this year and onwards after winning the election.

The DSAO ended with the questions and answers and reflections. Gabay COP, Dr. Quijano imparted words of thanks for partnership, and encouragement for the participants to continuously respond to existing concerns.

C.2 Gabay-Synergeia Partnership

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Synergeia Foundation and Resources for the Blind, Inc. was signed and notarized last Oct. 4, 2022 to give full support in Gabay (Guide) activity entitled “*Capacity Building and Technical Assistance for the Local School Board on Supporting the Education of Children with Sensorial Disabilities*” in Padre Garcia and Rosario in Batangas; Prieto Diaz and Bulusan in Sorsogon; and Macrohon and San Juan in Southern Leyte.

Under the agreement, the Synergeia Foundation leads the RBI’s Gabay (Guide): Strengthening Inclusive Education for Blind, Deaf and Deafblind Children in conducting assessment, and focus group discussion in collecting information on the current initiatives of the Local School Board (LSB) in the three DepEd divisions in terms of providing support to children with disabilities including those with sensorial disabilities.

With the MOA on place, Gabay management met the Municipal Mayors of Batangas, namely, Mayor Celsa B. Rivera of Padre Garcia and Mayor Leovigildo K. Morpe of Rosario on Sept. 5, 2022,

respectively. They were oriented about the objective and the scheduled activities which they gladly welcomed. The same activities were undertaken by Gabay Management to the Municipal Mayors of Sorsogon: Mayor Romeo D. Domasan of Prieto Diaz in Sept. 14 and Mayor Michael G. Gusayko of Bulusan in Sept. 15.



Mayor Gusayko of Bulusan offered to provide counterpart funding for the training of the members of the Local School Board as well as other LGU members whom he thinks are important in the upcoming activities. The two municipalities of Southern Leyte will be covered in the month of November 2022.

The agreement allows Gabay (Guide) Project to develop the capacities of the LSB members to support the educational needs of children with sensorial disabilities through the Special Education Fund and to document good practices demonstrated by any of the six Local School Boards through the rich experiences of Synergeia Foundation.

C.2.1 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) for the Program and Services Supporting the Education of Children with Sensorial Disabilities

Gabay intermediate result 3 focuses on increasing government attention to the programs and services of children with sensorial disabilities. Gabay's collaboration in the different municipalities, cities, and provinces in the project sites for three years resulted in more schools providing education services to children who are blind, low vision, deaf and hard of hearing.

There might still be remaining municipalities and central schools which have no enrolment for children with sensorial disabilities yet but Gabay is continuously working on this by coordinating with the LGUs on the conduct of activities such as Screening of Children with Sensorial Disabilities (CSDs) Community Health Workers, Disability Sensitivity Awareness Orientation (DSA0), and Primary Eye and Ear Care (PEEC) Training to the Community Health Workers (CHWs). Gabay claims that through these endeavors, there are more PWDs, community leaders and parents being engaged, more CHWs doing referrals, more schools reached, and more children with sensorial disabilities enrolled in the inclusion setting.

As sustainability plan for Gabay's current efforts, it is but appropriate that the Local Government Units through the Provincial/City/Municipal School Boards open opportunities, and adapt strategies that continuously help learners with disabilities, more so in their foundational and formative years pursuant to the mandates stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Philippine Constitution, RA 7277 or the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities of 1992.

In partnership with Synergeia Foundation, former USAID partner on projects for LGUs in transforming Local Chief Executives (LCEs) and leaders to govern and empower communities in creating programs that are community-based, demand-driven and performance-oriented, RBI will work on establishing guidelines for the Capacity Building and Technical Assistance on Advocating to the Local School Board (LSB) to Support the Education of Children with Sensorial Disabilities. This is a holistic approach in ensuring that children complete quality basic education. The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was already made and signed by both parties. Synergeia proposed a work plan with key activities, expected results/key accomplishments, timeline target completion dates after meetings and discussions with Gabay.

To develop an assessment tool that determine current support provided by LGUs to children with sensorial disabilities and identify the educational needs of such children in the project sites, Synergeia will facilitate the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) among the LGU officials, School Board, and School Heads of the municipalities in identified sites: Municipalities of Padre Garcia and Rosario in Batangas Province; Municipalities of Prieto Diaz and Bulusan in Sorsogon Province; and Municipalities of Macrohon and San Juan in Southern Leyte Province.

The FGDs will be conducted by the Synergeia per municipality for the purpose of gaining an in-depth understanding about the existing education needs of the children with sensorial disabilities per municipality. The data to be collected will be used on developing the training module specific for local school board programs and services.

FGDs in Two Municipalities of Batangas

The FGD was conducted via face-to-face on November 25, 2022 for 3 hours each in the Municipalities of Padre Garcia and Rosario. An assessment tool was given prior to the FGD for participants to answer. Information was gathered and discussion of responses was facilitated by Synergeia Team.

FGD in the Municipality of Padre Garcia, Batangas

On behalf of Hon. Mayor Celsa Rivera, Padre Garcia Municipal Administrator, Mr. Christopher Comia gave the welcome remarks.



It was followed by the Introduction of the Program for Children with Sensorial Disabilities by Gabay, Deputy Chief of Party, Ms. Amy Mojica who presented the Gabay project overview and the objectives of the FGD.

The Synergeia team facilitated the mechanics and conduct of FGD to 34 members of the Local School Board and community stakeholders led by Ms. Malou Recente, Former Undersecretary of the Department of Finance and now the Synergeia Research and Development Officer.



The assessment tool was given to the participants to answer and go over with the questions one by one and discuss responses from the participants. The discussion tackled the following items: Local School Board Meeting (schedule, members, agenda, etc.); Special Education Fund (SEF) Budget (programs, initiatives,

allocations, etc.); Special Education Programs and Services (data, partner organizations, etc.); and Programs for Learners with Special Needs (Local School Board plans, needs and concerns within Barangay Level, etc.).

FGD in the Municipality of Rosario, Batangas

Same with the program in Padre Garcia, the FGD in Rosario, Batangas was conducted in the afternoon to 45 members of the Local School Board, Barangay Officials and community stakeholders.

A question was asked to the DepEd Division SPED Supervisor, Dr. Marites Balba on why is it important to prioritize Special Education:

“It is very important to prioritize SPED because people are becoming more aware. As per my report on the division, there was a low enrolment of children with disabilities. But now, it increased to 1,971 in the whole Division of Batangas. It means people are becoming more aware that these children have rights to inclusive education. Parents are not that supportive before, now, the society gradually learns to accept SPED so it really deserves our attention as government service providers and as educators.” (Translated from Filipino)



For both Municipalities, an exhibit of Gabay Materials was displayed and distributed to the participants who requested for awareness raising and advocacy.



Sorsogon

Last November 25, 2022, Gabay and Synergeia Foundation, Inc. conducted the FGD in the Municipalities of Padre Garcia and Rosario in Batangas Province. The event was successfully completed and the team was able to gather information and learnings. From this activity, the team will utilize these inputs to make a training module as a blueprint on how the forthcoming training and what needed information and action shall be prioritized considering the unique concerns of each municipality. For this reporting, this will cover Gabay and Synergeia's FGDs conducted in Municipalities of Prieto Diaz and Bulusan, Sorsogon last February 1-2, 2023 and Municipalities of Macrohon and San Juan, Southern Leyte last February 22-23, 2023.

FGDs were conducted by the Synergeia per municipality for the purpose of gaining in-depth understanding about the existing education needs of the children with sensorial disabilities. The data collected will be used in developing the training module specific for local school board programs and services.

FGDs in two Municipalities of Sorsogon

The FGDs in Sorsogon were conducted via face-to-face last February 1, 2023 in Prieto Diaz and February 2, 2023 in Bulusan. An assessment tool was given for participants to answer. Information was gathered and discussion of responses was facilitated by the Synergeia Team. To further give an in-depth understanding of the importance of LGU involvement in providing services to the community, Synergeia included a talk on transforming Local School Boards (LSB) to both municipalities facilitated by former Vigan City Mayor, Hon. Juan Carlo Medina.

FGD in the Municipality of Prieto Diaz, Sorsogon

It started with the introduction of the Program for Children with Sensorial Disabilities by Gabay Deputy Chief of Party, Ms. Amy Mojica who also presented the Gabay project overview and the objectives of the FGD.



The Synergeia team facilitated the mechanics and conduct of FGD to 27 members of the Local School Board and community stakeholders. led by its Operations Officer, Ms. Anna Marie De Leon.

The assessment tool was given to the participants to answer and go over the questions one by one and discussed responses from the participants. The discussion tackled the following items:

- Local School Board Meeting (schedule, members, agenda, etc.)
- Special Education Fund (SEF) Budget (programs, initiatives, allocations, etc.)
- Special Education Programs and Services (data, partner organizations, etc.)
- Programs for Learners with Special Needs (Local School Board plans, needs and concerns within Barangay Level, etc.)



Former Mayor of Vigan City, Hon. Juan Carlo Medina shared his experience as the Local Chief Executive (LCE) in reinventing the Local School Board. He emphasized the importance of the active involvement and representation of people from the community.

During his talk, he highlighted strengthening the education through a reinvented LSB with a greater community involvement, bigger LGU role in service delivery, and higher achievement of students resulting to more children who can complete basic education. Mayor Medina pointed out to Prieto Diaz LSB members the following principles:



1. **Participation** - education is everyone's concern; everybody must be heard; everybody will have something good to contribute.
2. **Transparency** - decision-making, budgeting, and disbursement must be open for public scrutiny. Facts and statistics must be freely shared to community members.
3. **Accountability** - officials, teachers, parents, students have their responsibilities and roles to play. They must be rewarded if they do their responsibilities well. There are sanctions on those who perform badly.
4. **Stability and Predictability** - policies and programs are based on rules and standards, and are not based on personalities. Rules are administered in a consistent way.

His talk highlighted some best practices in other LGUs as well as the importance of the presence and support of the LCE as the one who should spearhead the programs of the LSB. He encouraged that persons with disabilities, parents, or even students could take part of the LSB for their voices to be heard. It is important that the government should hear their voices but it is equally important for them to voice out their needs. It also opened an interactive discussion for the Prieto Diaz Special Education Fund (SEF) and other data that should be disclosed during the LSB regular meeting. These include sharing of best practices and creative ways in raising funds for projects and programs for children with disabilities for sustainability even after Gabay project ends.



“It is very important that we help each other. I appreciate everyone here especially the doctors who assess children and confirm their disabilities. In this way, teachers will know how to give interventions. Let us build a committee or group that focuses on this sector. The Municipal Government and the Local School Board of Prieto Diaz is here to help, work together and accomplish these things.”

(Translated from Filipino)– Hon. Mayor Romeo Domasian Mayor of Prieto Diaz, Hon. Romeo Domasian gave his

message of support. As a former teacher, he understands the educational needs of these children with disabilities and expressed his willingness to strengthen their Municipal Local School Board through collaboration and partnerships for sustainability.

Municipality of Bulusan, Sorsogon

Same with the program in Prieto Diaz, the FGD in Bulusan, Sorsogon was conducted the next day to 17 members of the Local School Board and community stakeholders. Ms. Anna De Leon emphasized the importance of ownership of the program not by Gabay or Synergeia but by the Municipality of Bulusan to sustain the project through the LSB.



Former Mayor JC Medina gave pointers on what to do to reinvent LSBs:

- **Full involvement of LCEs**
 - LCE chairs LSB meetings and leads program planning and implementation.
- **Expand LSB membership**
 - Identify other sectors that can provide support in improving delivery and quality of basic education. This may include representatives of NGOs/POs, local academic institutions, the private sector, media, Punong Barangay, retired teachers.

- **Hold regular meetings**
 - Have a set agenda and a record of the meeting.
- **Assess data on student performance**
 - Benchmark achievement scores: participation, survival, completion and achievement
- **Set targets to reduce dropout and improve participation and achievement level of students**
 - The targets will be evaluated against the benchmarks to monitor progress
- **Hold regular community consultations/dialogue**
 - Municipal, barangay, and school summits to draw out problems in education and identify simple programs that can address the needs, achieve targets and mobilize support from community
- **Implement simple programs to realize summit agreements in partnership with the community**
 - Program implementation is done collaboratively with community stakeholders
- **Monitor attainment of targets**
 - Evaluate impact of programs against the targets set, i.e. for improving participation, survival and achievement
- **Review and improve SEF administration**
 - Improve systems in SEF collection and utilization

The discussion was also interactive with the participation of more LSB members along with Bulusan Municipal Mayor, Hon. Michael Guysayko.

“Whatever it is that cannot be covered by the Special Education Fund (SEF) because of the limited resources, rest assured that the Local Government of Bulusan, the Office of the Mayor is here to help and fund the needs of schools especially for our PWD constituents.” (Translated from Filipino) – Hon. Michael Guysayko.



According to Mayor Guysayko, SEF budget is really limited. LSB members decide based on the priorities and once resources are not enough, the Office of the Mayor as well as the Office of the Governor allocate additional funding. As re-elected Mayor of Bulusan, education is given the priority through scholarships.

Mayor Guysayko also opened the floor for other participants to tell the needs regarding the disability sector with the following:

Concerns	Action/Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional SPED Teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor allocated 7,500 teachers to be deployed by the schools in the province. It will be funded by the Provincial Government of Sorsogon.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of PDAO Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting shall be held with Budget Office • Should be led by a Person with Disability • Funding can be obtained on the Construction of New Multipurpose Center
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolment of CWDs increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to tap specialists • Let the Mayor's Office know of enrolment updates and proposed program for possible funding/budget on educational interventions

For both municipalities, Gabay materials were displayed and distributed to the participants who requested for awareness raising and advocacy.

FGDs in Southern Leyte

The FGDs in Southern Leyte were conducted via face-to-face on February 22, 2023 for Municipality of Macrohon and February 23, 2023 for the Municipality of San Juan. Same with the previously conducted FGDs in Batangas and Sorsogon, an assessment tool was given to participants to answer and discussion of responses was facilitated by the Synergeia Team. Led by former Vigan City Mayor, Hon. Juan Carlo Medina and former Department of Finance (DOF) Undersecretary, Ms. Malou Recente, the FGDs also tackled reinventing Local School Boards (LSBs) to both municipalities to further strengthen their understanding on the importance of LGU involvement in providing services to their communities.

Municipality of Macrohon, Southern Leyte

The FGD in Macrohon, Southern Leyte was participated by 46 members of the Local School Board and community stakeholders. It started with an opening program with a welcome message from Mr. Felix Pagolong to represent Macrohon Municipal Mayor, Hon. Mayor Alan K. Aroy.



“This is a huge and great opportunity for us, people of Macrohon to receive help, acquire skills and knowledge through this program for children with sensorial disabilities including their parents and teachers . On behalf of the mayor of our Municipality, we wholeheartedly extend our support and gratefulness for this good cause.” (Translated from Cebuano) – Mr. Felix Pagolong representing the Office of the Mayor

It was followed by the introduction of the Program for Children with Sensorial Disabilities by Gabay Deputy Chief of Party, Ms. Amy Mojica who also presented the Gabay project overview and the objectives of the FGD. The Synergeia team then took over the mechanics and conduct of FGD led by Ms. Malou Recente. She introduced one of Synergeia’s mentors, Former Vigan City Mayor, Hon. Juan Carlo Medina. The assessment was likewise given to the participants to answer and go over with the questions one by one to discuss responses from the participants.

Former Mayor Medina walked through with the questions among the participants and opened an interactive discussion for the Macrohon LSB with its Special Education Fund (SEF). He also mentioned some best practices and other ways to collect real property tax in order to increase the SEF. By assessing their current LSB, Macrohon Municipality will be able to know what areas to be improved in designing programs and services for children with special needs. This would involve community representatives like parents, teachers or even the youth sector to raise concerns and let their voices be heard.

Former Mayor Medina also asked of the trainings and interventions Gabay has provided to the participants which they responded positively. After this, he asked them if they want to continue receiving these interventions so he challenged them with the question below: *With what Gabay has started in Macrohon, (e.g., training for parents, teachers and community health workers), what could the local government do to sustain these programs even after the project ends?* This triggered the idea that Macrohon people must participate actively and appeal to the government in terms of their educational needs.

Benchmarking with Vigan City and other local governments with good educational governance like Naga City and Lanao Del Sur, Mayor Medina shared good stories and experiences that Macrohon could also adopt.

The discussion ended with a closing message from the DepEd Division of Southern Leyte SPED Supervisor quoting an excerpt from the Bible to challenge the participants:

“If Jesus, a great teacher did not turn a blind eye to a blind man, Bartimaeus, who are we to neglect these less fortunate members of the community? Who are we to not look and respond to their needs?” – DepEd Southern Leyte, Division Supervisor-in-charge of SPED, Dr. Charity Nogra



Municipality of San Juan, Southern Leyte



The FGD in San Juan, Southern Leyte was conducted the next day with the same program in Macrohon to 38 members of the Local School Board and community stakeholders. A special message was given by Mr. Owen Cero to represent San Juan Municipal Mayor, Hon. Reynaldo Saludo.

“We, at the Municipality of San Juan is very lucky and fortunate to be chosen for this program to help the persons especially the children with disabilities in our community. With all our support and efforts, we hope that this will be successful” (Translated from Cebuano) –Office of the Mayor, Secretary, Mr. Owen Cero



Synergeia Research and Development Officer Ms. Malou Recente introduced Synergeia Foundation on what it does in partnership with Local Government Units, emphasizing the involvement of the members of the community which is the very essence of the FGD.

Same with Macrohon, the assessment tool and discussion was facilitated by Former Mayor Juan Carlo Medina. He also provided inputs on the importance of educational governance.

A closing message was given to end the program this time from one of the LSB Members, Public Schools District Supervisor of San Juan District expressing his hope that the project’s interventions will continue:



“I would like to grab this opportunity to thank Gabay and Synergeia – synergy, meaning working together. Even if our Mayor is not here with us, I know he is supporting this, let us work together, all the stakeholders of Municipality of San Juan for our children. Hopefully this will not be the end, but the start towards our successful educational endeavors” – San Juan Public School District Supervisor, Mr. Angelito Paca

C.2.2 Local School Board Exposure Visits and Training to Improve Programs for Children with Disabilities

The Exposure Visits and Training was a 2-day activity with an overall goal to improve programs for children with disabilities in the 6 municipalities through action plans, policies, resolutions as outputs of the benchmarking and capacity building activity.

The Exposure Visits aimed to help LSB members:

- understand the importance of resources and services that could be provided,
- learn best practices that could be replicated, and
- engage in a discussion about the programs that could be improved.

The Training aimed to help LSB members:

- realize that they can pull children out of the education crisis,
- reaffirm their commitment to include special children especially the blind and deaf into their education program, and
- become familiar with processes on Reinventing Local School Boards

in serving the children with disabilities in their respective municipality

Conduct of the Exposure Visits (June 14, 2023)

The 36 participants registered and checked in a day before the 2-day activity. Prior to the Exposure Visits, a short opening program was conducted at 7:30am hosted by Ms. Loy De Vera Ang. Participants were acknowledged, welcomed by RBI Chairman of Board of Trustees and oriented by Gabay Chief of Party, Dr. Yolanda Quijano.



*“Let us not be blind to their right to inclusion.
Let us not be deaf to their right to quality
education.”*

-Mr. Gary Jamora, RBI Chairman, Board of Trustees

Mr. Jamora emphasized 3 points in his welcome message:

- a. **“Synergy”** which means “Working Together” – support and collaboration as part of the commitment as Local School Board Members – the duty bearers, service providers and educators in the respective municipalities.
- b. **“Sensitivity”** – to be sensitive enough to respond to the needs of Batangueño, Sorsogonon and Southern Leyteño children with disabilities as frontliners in providing services in the community.

- c. **“Sustainability”** – opportunity to learn about best practices that could be replicated, resources that could be allocated, programs and services that could be provided – all to sustain Gabay’s interventions, even after the project ends in 2024.

It was followed by the objectives shared by Dr. Quijano and an orientation of the program with some reminders and announcements for the 2-day activities

A. Valenzuela SPED Center and Valenzuela City Hall



Gabay participants/visitors went first to the first locally funded special education center in the Philippines, the Valenzuela SPED (ValSped) Center.

Upon arrival, they were welcomed and oriented by Dr. Teresita Pangan, SPED Coordinator, DepEd Division of Valenzuela City.

Dr. Pangan emphasized that the Center is part of the 360 degrees Education Investment Program, the city’s holistic, systemic, community-driven and student-centric education program that aims to go beyond the regular gravel and sand solutions of solving education woes in the city. The ValSped Center focuses on “mainstreaming inclusion” to immerse the students in customary classes and normal environment that do not separate them from the regular students.

The four-storey ValSped Center accommodates children with disabilities (CWDs) from public schools who are enrolled in occupational, physical and speech therapy sessions, early intervention care, and job transition skills program. It has 14 rooms that cater to various needs of the CWDs which include occupational therapy room, physical therapy room, speech therapy room, assessment room, early intervention area, resource room, multi-purpose room, conference area, faculty room, computer laboratory, restaurant café and simulation area for the job skill transition program.

To maximize time and space, participants were divided into two where the first group toured the facilities for visual impairment (2nd floor) and the other group in the hearing impairment (3rd floor).



Participants were very interested on how the ValSped Center operates. It was also an opportunity for parents and teachers to ask questions and gain ideas for benchmarking. Below are some points discussed and shared:

- ValSped Center caters to students from all walks of life – open to all
(0 reject – accept all)
- w/ Diagnosis – provide Allied Medical Services (AMS)
- w/o Diagnosis (showing manifestations) – address needs through Special Education Program

- Open also to non-Valenzuela citizens through the **strong partnership with LGU and DepEd**
- For (AMS), priority are Valenzuela citizens
- Services are **free** (0 fees) – subsidized by the City Government: All equipment are provided by LGUs; honorarium for AMS and SPED teachers comes from City Government of Valenzuela and DepEd respectively.
- Teacher items - qualified through Reclassification
- Education units (18) from Universities are being offered for AMS providers (e.g., UST, St. Paul, St. Scholastica, PNU, CEU)
- Enrolment – Transition – Bridging Program = transitional curriculum (functional academics, life skills, etc.)
- Early Intervention (Pre-school and Kinder School) includes integration of subjects
- Advocacy: implementation of K-12 curriculum – must be age appropriate and developmentally appropriate

Teaching personnel shared some best practices and demonstration during their classes. Participants realized the importance of the strong partnership and collaboration between the Local Government Unit and DepEd as well as the support coming from allied medical partners, NGOs and other stakeholders.





This was strengthened when the participants arrived at the Valenzuela City Hall for a Panel Discussion with the City Government of Valenzuela headed by Vice Mayor Lorena Natividad-Borja.




This created an avenue for participants especially LGU officials to raise questions about their best practices that could be possibly replicated in their respective municipalities:

Below are some points discussed and highlighted:

Questions/Concerns	Responses
1. Rosario, Batangas Hon. Vice Mayor Atanacio Zara expressed gratitude for the opportunity to see the progressive city. He also voiced his desire for Batangas to have their own SPED Center in the future.	- Vice Mayor Borja, shared that Valenzuela has been communicating with Batangas in terms of sharing modules when she was still a former councilor of the City.
2. Bulusan, Sorsogon Municipal Mayor Hon. Mark Dominguez asked about how the ValSped started and how it became progressive.	- Vice Mayor Borja shared the history of Valenzuela SPED program and emphasized that it did not start big but began with just few students. Just like any other cities, their problem was the parents who were not supportive to their CWDs. The challenge was to encourage them but they started and focused with just one (1) school and just two (2) SPED teachers. After that, the parents began to see the LGU's support on the programs and eventually, additional schools opened SPED program until the center was launched in 2016.

Questions/Concerns	Responses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>It was not easy and it takes a lot of time and effort but we make it a point to allocate budget regularly to regularize education programs for parents to see that there is really Education for ALL.</i> - Dr. Pangan emphasized the importance of the LGU visibility on its initiatives. At first, Vice Mayor Borja initiated giving gifts and assistance to CWDs from the City Government of Valenzuela. Now, they have a lot of partners and stakeholders who are helping and supporting the funding. She also mentioned the importance of reclassification of SPED teacher items provided that they have students to handle and they have undergone the required trainings.
<p>3. Councilor Dominguez also asked about the policies about Special Education</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ordinances and Resolutions will be shared by the City Government of Valenzuela including referrals to implement programs like employment, livelihood, humanity and inclusion of persons with disabilities.
<p>4. Prieto Diaz Admin Officer expressed her desire for their municipality to have their own SPED center and asked about how could they gather resources to start</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LGU Valenzuela gave the following suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 4th and 5th municipalities are priorities under the Mandanas Ruling, but was not fully realized because of the pandemic in which they can lobby b. Tapping of other organizations and institutions (NGOs, CSOs, other allied medical practitioners) that can help and offer their services c. Forming of parents' association as support group to reinforce advocacy in sending CWDs to school. d. Expansion of the Local School Board (Include Private Sector, funding partners, etc.) for shared responsibility
<p>5. Macrohon Southern Leyte Hon. Mayor Alan Jose Aroy and San Juan Municipal Councilor, Hon. Sixto Evaldez shared the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Valenzuela LGU Officials suggested that given the limited available funds, SPED program could be first prioritized before the facilities.

Questions/Concerns	Responses
<p>challenges of lower class municipalities in terms of funding and financial constraints in provinces compared to cities.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They also encouraged 4th and 5th Municipalities that provinces have huge land for facilities. They can also focus first on one school and tap private organizations or institutions to help LGUs and DepEd on a voluntary basis. - Dr. Pangan mentioned that a DepEd program support fund is available for schools offering SPED programs intended for the capacity building of teachers and school heads including the procurement of assistive devices for CWDs. Not all the burden lies on the Local Government.

Some LGU officials felt dismayed and pitiful because of the gaps and needs in their municipalities compared to what Valenzuela has achieved arising from the concept that their resources are poor, limited and small. But this was corrected by COP, Dr. Quijano that being poor is just a mindset. Change of perspective is needed. She emphasized how Gabay was able to triple the enrolment in Southern Leyte through the collaboration with LGU especially the community health workers. She also highlighted that this visit was for LGU leaders to dream upon seeing and realizing that others can – the goal is not to be Valenzuela but become a municipality that take actions to improve local services for CWDs. She challenged participants that poor resources will never be a hindrance when you start even with simple and single steps to help CWDs.



This was agreed and seconded by Southern Leyte officials by mentioning that they are just sharing the reality but not telling that they cannot do it. This visit and discussion opened their perspective to really commit in improving local services especially that their CWDs' enrollment has increased.

In addition, Southern Leyte Division SPED Supervisor, Dr. Charity Nogra shared the impact of Gabay project by increasing enrolment from 200 to 600 enrolled CWDs in Southern Leyte through the series of training and capacity building. Macrohon District SPED



Center was also the national qualifier of the FSL interpretation among the 13 Divisions of Eastern Visayas because of project Gabay.



After the meaningful discussion, a token of appreciation was awarded by the LGU Valenzuela on behalf of Hon. Mayor Wesley Gatchallian.



Hon. Vice Mayor Atanacio Zara
Municipality of Rosario



Hon. Mayor Alan Jose Aroy
Municipality of Macrohon

Lunch was also hosted by the LGU Valenzuela, after which, the participants headed to the first public school that established a SPED Center in Quezon City, Batino Elementary School. (BES)

B. Batino SPED Center



The visit started with a welcome remarks from DepEd Division of Quezon City, Assistant Schools Division Superintendent, Dr. Noel Bagano expressing his gratitude and emphasizing that this is an avenue to learn from each other's practices.

It was then followed by a tour on their 4-storey newly built Inclusive Learning Resource Center (ILRC) led by BES School Principal, Dr. Jayda Malonzo. As mandated by the law, the center will cater to the CWDs — including those with autism, intellectual disability, visually and or hearing impaired. Facilities include fitness room, IT room, cooking area, aquaponics, and a swimming pool for hydrotherapy where ramp is accessible for children with physical disability.

This time, participants especially those from the Department of Education and Central Schools were very much interested as they can relate with a public school- based perspective. According to them, the BES is a perfect example of an ILRC.



Same with the ValSped, the collaboration and support of the Local Government of Quezon City was emphasized.



Based from the participant's feedback, the school leadership makes the success of their SPED Center which is very evident with Dr. Malonzo's hands-on guidance and direction.

The ILRC Tour and Discussion was also helpful in the finalization of the Gabay Operational Manual of ILRC as one of the project initiatives.



After the tour, the participants went back to the hall for an open forum and Q&A.

Below are some points discussed and highlighted:

- Transition Program of LSEs (dressmaking, bread & pastries baking, etc.) conducted side by side with parents – referral to partners for employment
- 41 Deaf Learners: most of them have assessments
- Network and linkages are very important.
- BES welcomes “open house” class observations for parents and other stakeholders to witness actual special program (transdisciplinary program)
- Placement of CWDs: emphasis on parents’ acceptance of their CWD
- If there is no assessment, MFAT is utilized. CWDs with no clinical assessments are referred to PDAO and other partners. Php 8Million budget was allocated by the Local Government of QC with priority on parents who cannot afford.
- Parent volunteers as part of the commitment to CWDs
- School Leaders’ visibility is very important
- Quirino High School is a partner after completing Basic Education
- MOOE: Php64,000.00 only. They are resourceful to look for other sources to survive.
- Lesson Plans and IEPs; Overage CWDs
- Dedication and commitment of SPED Teachers: Highlighting teachers with disability: Ms. Jennilyn Marayag (Low Vision) and Mr. Kevin Gamboa (Deaf)

Conduct of the Training



The next day was the 2nd part of the activity which is the Training to Improve Programs for CWDs facilitated by the Gabay partner in working with LGUs, the Synergeia Foundation Inc. The opening program began with the acknowledgment of participants. Before the session, was the sharing of Key Takeaways from the Exposure Visits which is an instrumental part in this 1-day Training.

Facilitated by Deputy Chief of Party, Ms. Amy Mojica, the 6 municipalities expressed their takeaways through visual gestural communication and 1 representative per site shared their learnings and realizations.



“For inclusion to work on, we need to be seated on the table. Partnership is a must for Inclusive Education (IE). IE is a journey. It is a process, so we believe that IE must be worked hand-in-hand together. If the Valenzuela and Batino were able to successfully implement IE because of their wide partnerships, Batangas also can. We cannot do it alone. We need the support of everyone especially the Local School Board.” – Dr. Marites Balba, DepEd Batangas

Division SPED Supervisor.

“The visits inspired us to work more. Wag nating isipin na mahirap ang lugar natin. Isipin nating kaya natin. Sa una talaga magsisimula tayo sa baba. Kumbaga, paunti-unti mararating din natin kung anong meron ang Valenzuela at Batino. Kailangan nating magka-isa po at magtrabaho ng may dedikasyon. Yung mga social services pala namin kulang pa. So nagkaroon kami ng idea kung paano sila bigyan ng mas mainam na serbisyo at programa kabilang na ang mga policy institutionalizing SPED Center in Bulusan.” – Hon. Mark Dominguez, Municipal Councilor, Bulusan, Sorsogon



“The partnership and collaboration of LGU and DepEd is very evident. We saw the impact of the Government funding be it local (Valenzuela) or national (DepEd on Batino). Rest assured that we will allocate funds in San Juan SPED Center by institutionalizing policies in our Municipality.” – Hon. Sixto Evaldez, Municipal Councilor, San Juan, Southern Leyte

The Training Session followed which was facilitated by Synergeia President & CEO, Dr. Milwida Guevara with Former Mayor of San Fernando City, Hon. Rey Aquino and Former Mayor of Vigan City, Hon. Carlo Medina as resource persons.



Dr. Guevarra started by discussing the result of the FGDs conducted on the 6 municipalities emphasizing that *“Local School Boards can make every child matters”*.





It was an interactive session as participants shared experiences and learn best practices in terms of Local School Board (LSB) expansion from Mayor Aquino and Mayor Medina. After the discussion, the six (6) municipalities were given an Action Plan template in strengthening/reinventing LSBs and integrating special children in LSB agenda to be presented as outputs of the training.



The afternoon session began with a special message from USAID/Philippines Agreement Officer Representative, Mr. Henry Grageda emphasizing that CWDs have all the capabilities to learn given the right opportunities and attention to their needs which is primarily what the participants are doing. Despite the pandemic, volcanic eruptions, typhoons or even the earthquake would not stop the project's commitment and resilience resulting to triple increase in enrollment of CWDs These efforts could be continued through the involvement of local service providers for sustainability.



Before the presentation of the outputs, Synergeia conducted a team building activity for the 6 municipalities wherein they need to build a tower using spaghetti strands and marshmallows. This aims to build teamwork among the participants in planning and strategizing just as how they are working together in their communities.



Municipality of Padre Garcia



Municipality of Rosario



Municipality of Prieto Diaz



Municipality of Bulusan



Municipality of Macrohon

Municipality of San Juan

Below are their learnings from the Team-Building activity:

- One must lead and decide what to do and how to do it
- Team members' suggestions and ideas contribute a lot on goal's success
- Solid foundation is very important for the tower to stand

This was followed by the presentation of outputs per municipalities where most of them include reorganizing LSB Members, prioritizing a program with immediate impact, allocating funds for program implementation, capacity building, updating PWD data and partnership with NGOs and other stakeholders.

The training ended with a closing program with includes the highlights, impressions of the activity, awarding of certificates and photo opportunity. To conclude the activity, a commitment wall was signed by the participants signifying their responsibility and accountability to put their plans into actions





“It was indeed a very productive 2-days to collaborate with all of you as duty bearers in providing access to inclusive education for the right bearers, our children with disabilities. May all these fruitful discussions, commitment plans translate to local ordinances, resolutions and improved services when we go back to our respective offices.” – Ms. Amelia Torrente, Executive Director, RBI

Ms. Torrente emphasized in her closing remarks to put into action all the outputs and learnings of this activity – all for the benefit of our children. Para sa bata, para sa bayan - to do it for our children with disability, for our community, for our country, for God’s glory.

[See Annex for Synergiea Report](#)

III. MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OUTPUTS

Table 35: Summary of Intermediate Results (IR) Activities

IR1	IR2	IR3
A.1 Primary Eye and Ear Care (PEEC) Training for Community Health Workers (CHWs) with Vision and Hearing Screening	B.1 Skills Training for Teachers and Parents of Children with Deafblindness and Multiple Disabilities and Visual Impairment (MDVI)	C.1 Disability Sensitivity Awareness Orientation to LGU Focal Key Persons
	B.2 Hybrid Deaf Mentorship for Parents and Teachers of the Deaf	
A.2 Retraining on Basic Audiometric Testing to Para-Audiometrists	B.3 Training of Teachers for Enhancing Reading Experiences of Children with Sensorial Disabilities	C.2 Gabay-Synergeia Partnership a. Focus Group Discussions for the Program and Services Supporting the Education of Children with Disabilities b. Exposure Visit and Training to Local School Board Members and Community Stakeholders to Improve Programs for Children with Disabilities
	B.4 Training of Parents with Community Leaders on Supporting Children with Sensorial Disabilities	
A.3 Presentation of Hearing/Audiological Test Center (H/ATC) Operational Guidelines	B.5 Technical Assistance and Mentoring on Program Quality Indicators (PQI) by Perkins International	
A.4 Inauguration of Hearing/Audiological Test Centers (H/ATC)	B.6 Presentation of the Operations Manual of the Inclusive Education Community Resource Center	
	B.7 Inauguration of Inclusive Education Community Resource Centers	
	B.8 Production of Additional Learning Materials for Blind and Deaf	
A.5 Enrolment of Children with Sensorial Disabilities (SY 2021-2022)	B.9 2nd Feedback on the Filipino Sign Language Curriculum	
	B.10 Braille Reading Assessment	
	B.11 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) Endline Evaluation	
	B.12 Monitoring and Technical Assistance Provided	

D. OTHERS

- BETA Test for the Remote EGRA of Learners who are Deaf and/or Hard-of-Hearing
- USAID Documentation of Success Stories
- Year 3 Annual Debriefing
- USAID Visits

D.1 Beta Test for the Remote EGRA of Learners who are Deaf and/or Hard-of-Hearing

Research Triangle Institute (RTI) International of the United States is leading a project on designing Remote Administration of Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) during emergencies/disasters for early learners who are deaf or hard of hearing. This work is being funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and is building off an assessment designed by the USAID Gabay project.

In May 2022, a training was conducted by STS for Proctors, Help Desk Support, Observers and Sign Language Interpreters aimed to provide them the basic knowledge and skills needed for the Alpha testing. At the end of the Alpha test training, participants were able to: (i) understood the purpose of the alpha test, (ii) navigated through Tangerine on the tablet with basic fluency and can guide students through the assessment, (iii) understood their role and responsibilities in the alpha test, and (iv) confident how-to setup the assessment space. The selected Observers were DepEd Consultants, DepEd SPED Supervisors and a few RBI Gabay Staff. The DepEd Consultants and SPED Supervisors have many years of expertise in handling deaf and reading assessments. Sign Language Interpreters also participated to be oriented on the scenarios during administration of the test. Other participants during that day were the teacher-proctors, and online help desk support of Scenario 2. There were six (6) proctors selected for the training, two (2) proctors for each scenario. RBI Gabay also chose one (1) Deaf Professional from the region where Scenario 2 was tested as the online FSL Support.

The Alpha testing was conducted last May 31 to June 2022 in the National Capital Region and other regional sites. In the Alpha test phase, Gabay attempted three possible scenarios of asynchronous administration identified from the landscape review and consultative process.

The deaf students received instructions through pre-recorded videos in FSL and students' responses were video captured and asynchronously scored after the students completed the assessment. During the Alpha testing, the National Capital Region (NCR) and the Gabay's project regional sites were identified to represent the types of resource areas. In coordination with STS, RBI was tasked to make the arrangements for efficient implementation of the Alpha testing to selected Filipino deaf students in identified schools located in the Philippines. RBI coordinated with DepEd on the Alpha final samples of deaf students, their schools, the names of assessors and specific schedule of testing and submitted this to RTI and STS for approval.

After the Alpha test and scorers' results, STS gathered all observations and presented the findings to RTI and other USAID specialists. Meetings and discussions were made and through the assistance of the selected observers and proctors coordinated by RBI Gabay, major problems were identified and RTI and STS worked with the recommended revisions prior to the Beta Test tool being ready.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN OF THE BETA TEST

Goals of the Asynchronous Remote EGRA in the Beta Testing

The purpose of Asynchronous EGRA is to prototype—that is, to design, develop and test for proof of concept and acceptability—an early grade reading assessment for early students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing to be administered asynchronously with deaf assessors and enumerators who are not on-site with the students being assessed through the use of tablets (with Tangerine LEARN app). It specifically aims to:

1. review the performance of the Tangerine app and its process of administration by getting a bigger sample;
2. unravel missing links on what needs to be done and what is done well;
3. discover new case scenarios not identified during the alpha test with bigger number to test all sides effectively;
4. ensure compatibility of the Tangerine: Learn to deaf students and their environment in general;
5. solve new-found problems with the app; and
6. question and test solutions if quickly solved during the administration to check its appropriateness in the actual scenarios.

RTI and STS had deliberations if the three (3) scenarios would still be applied with improved apps and scripts in Beta Test. They came into agreement on the very purpose of remote EGRA, which is to prototype a modality for a remote assessment that can be scalable, feasible, and cost efficient. Refocusing attention on these themes led to focusing on the assessment form rather than testing external variables (proctors and help desk support). According to their findings, with the limited number of fluent FSL teachers/Deaf mentors/artists who can act as FSL fluent proctors and help desk supports, testing the scenarios with FSL fluent proctors and the online help desk pulls away from the scalability and feasibility of the remote EGRA. RTI suggested testing an assessment with receptive subtasks that could reduce the time the child spends on the assessment as well as reduce time for scoring, and further, receptive subtasks might require less external support for the learner.

STS and RTI recommended the Beta to focus on non-fluent proctor scenarios with two assessment forms. The first form is the same as what was tested at alpha. The second form includes the same subtasks and items. The difference is that letter name and familiar word reading are in the receptive subtask, rather than in the productive/expressive subtask. The table below provides an outline for the assessments:

FORM 1 (same as alpha)	FORM 2 (same with Alpha except Letter name & Familiar word)
Receptive	Receptive
Expressive	Expressive
Sign language comprehension	Sign language comprehension
Letter name	Letter name (<i>receptive</i>)
Familiar word	Familiar word (<i>receptive</i>)
Sentence reading comprehension	Sentence reading comprehension

The following are the activities for Beta Test executed from August to September 2022.

A. Selection and Organization of Schools- August 8-15, 2022

On the school list, RBI Gabay identified schools from within the region that Gabay served, or nearby regions such as Regions 7 and 8. RBI Gabay worked on even distribution between urban and rural schools. All of these are regular schools with inclusion of learners with disabilities. RBI Gabay reached out to the region and division offices for their list of deaf students from Grades 2 to 6.

There were 18 schools targeted for 180 deaf students.

For the testing environment, RBI sought STS advice since based on experiences RBI could request rooms to the school heads but if no other available rooms the team would maximize the only rooms available or provided by the school. RBI primarily thought that there might be classrooms which are not conducive for testing and believed this would gain more realistic scenarios especially during emergencies.

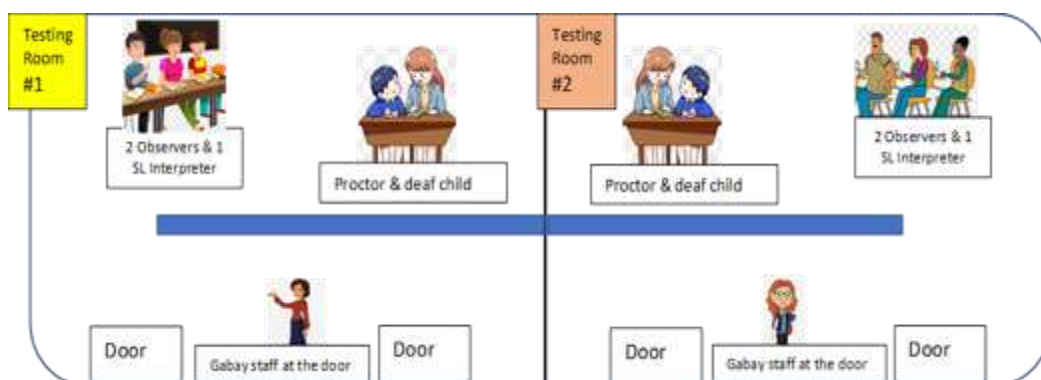
B. Finalization of the Beta Tool- August 15-Sept. 15, 2022

RTI finalized the tool, Tangerine Learn App. The following are the changes of the tool in comparison with the tool utilized during alpha:

- changed “don’t know” button to GIF
- art design for the start and end of the test
- the appearance of sign questions first and camera and record function introduced later
- Video instructions in signs were reduced. The video instruction was shortened, simplified, and clearer.
- Demo videos were added.
- Practice items in all subtasks were added.
- New images were added to expressive vocabulary.
- Response items for letter name and familiar word subtasks in form 2 were added.
- Changed pictures of “kitchen”, “playground”, “mall” and “goat”
- Button “don’t know or skip” were presented where it is visible in every screen and no need for scroll up/down.

C. Identification of Proctors, Observers, Scorers, and Sign Language Interpreters in three Teams – Aug. 29-Sept. 9, 2022

RBI Gabay selected the schools, then suggested the number of Proctors, Observers, Scorers, and Sign Language Interpreters. A total of three teams; (1) Division of Quezon City, NCR; (2) Division of Cavite, Region 4A; and (3) Divisions of Cebu City and Cebu for Region 7 was organized. Each team visited six (6) schools to cater 60 deaf students per team.



Initially, RBI proposed for the four (4) proctors per site to accommodate two assessments simultaneously conducted in one school with two (2) proctors in the same room doing the task alternately. But STS thought this might be excessive. On average, there would be ten assessments at each school, which will mean five per assessment “group”. With four (4) proctors, STS believed that each proctor will experience less assessments which could lessen the practicability of proctor support. Decreasing the number of proctors may also favor the decision on training expenses. With this, RBI went back to getting two (2) proctors at each site and let one (1) proctor experience 5 assessments on average.

For Observers per team or site, STS also believed that four observers and two sign language interpreters may be overwhelming to the student. However, RBI explained the set-up and that the intention was to have two separate testing areas since two tests will be conducted simultaneously. With this, there were two (2) SL Interpreters decided on each team/site. RBI shared the envisioned diagram of the room set-up per school with two separate testing areas done simultaneously by two (2) proctors.

RBI Gabay identified Observers who are Specialists of the Deaf Education either former or presently DepEd employees. Gabay was able to get the availability of the RBI consultants for deaf education and the Division SPED Supervisors in the divisions where these schools are situated.

The Sign Language (SL) Interpreters also were present during administration as support to observers and to students during the student survey. They were selected based on their proficiency in interpreting FSL or ASL used in the region.

For the Scorers, STS recommended having two (2) Scorers per region, But RBI suggested for four (4) Scorers instead to consider time and also worked on getting more feedback and comparability, since each would still score more than 10 deaf students' results. With alpha test scoring experiences, RBI estimated 1 to 1.5 day/s for 10 students per scorer, depending on the internet stability. If numbers of Scorers would be reduced to only six (6) for all sites, this might take 3-4 days for each of them to finish assigned numbers. And since, these are DepEd teachers and they were not allowed to skip classes so they might do these extra tasks after office hours.

STS agreed on the number of Scorers and they would like to be able to look at interrater reliability and have scorers review the same assessment responses. So, within each site, two (2) scorers would review the same 30 assessments and the two (2) other scorers would review the remaining 30 assessments.

So finally, it was decided that two (2) proctors are allotted per school to accommodate two assessments happening simultaneously. Having two separate groups of assessments at each school site with each group assigned to a different assessment form (Forms 1 and 2). Each team (3 teams) must have 12 Proctors, 4 Observers, 2 SL Interpreters, and 4 Scorers, in which they must accomplish testing 60 deaf students and 18 schools.

D. Video Productions for Cebuano and Tagalog Sign Language – Sept. 1-2, 8-9, 15, 2022

RBI Gabay discussed the appropriate buttons like “don't know”, choice of options either in words or in images of the subtasks, while STS proceeded with the modification of the scripts. When RBI Gabay received the revised scripts for beta test, Deaf Artists together with Mr. Mark Jayobo, the Interpreter reviewed and suggested FSL signs for the instructions. Mr. Justine Barcenas did the signing for the Tagalog version, while a Deaf from Cebu provided the signs for the Cebuano version. RBI and the Deaf discussed the appropriate visual FSL to the written text.

STS and RTI coordinated the demo videos for tangerine app which were used by RBI in recording demonstration videos with a deaf student.

RBI prioritized the recording of the demonstration items. RTI plugged the recorded demo videos first to be used by RBI in the filming of the child demonstrating their responses to the items. Examples of the demo videos were the items “baby”, “B”, “ball”. Responses options were also provided by RBI Gabay in consultations with Deaf Professionals.

There was a total of 60 compilations of videos each for Tagalog and Cebuano. Demo videos with the deaf child were also inserted to some subtasks as instructed. RBI edited and reduced the sizes of the videos and sent them to RTI for Tangerine Learn update.

E. Training of Observers, Proctors and SL Interpreters- Sept. 20, 2022

STS Ms. Melyssa Sibal and Ms. Emily Crane travelled from the US to the Philippines to mainly facilitate the Beta Test training and administration. Initially, RBI Gabay proposed an in-person training, however, due to budget constraints, it could not support all travel expenses of the 32 Proctors so RBI sought STS the team decision. The STS team conducted brainstorming and identified alternatives, and suggested three (3) options.

- a. In-person training for all proctors- In-person is probably the best method to train, as proctors will be able to see and interact with the application in-person but costly and not scalable.
- b. In-person training for one (1) proctor from each school, proctor would then provide training to other selected proctors- Less costly but not all proctors will have experience with tablets (may have to do one-hour orientation for proctors who were not in-person).
- c. Completely remote training with one-hour orientation at the beginning of each school visit- Most cost-effective but proctors would not have any access to tablets until the day of school visit. It may encounter internet difficulties during training and less quality control of training.

From this, RBI provided recommendations along with the pros and cons for each option. RBI endorsed a combination of Option b and c wherein one (1) Proctor per school will be joining in-person, but the other one will be joining remotely. Initially it was discussed that there will be no orientation at school anymore except the in-person proctor orient the other proctor who joined via Zoom with the tablet manipulation.

With this, RBI will let some Proctors bring the tablets depending on the availability, those who have perceived challenges in tablet handling. However, after the training, this was changed into conducting about 30minutes to 1-hour orientation prior to the administration to actual students.



Due to budget availability, the training was decided to be conducted in one day only. So, last September 20, 2022, the hybrid training was conducted. All 36 Proctors, 12 Observers, and 6 SL Interpreters joined. Below table 1 represents the mode of their attendance.

Table 36. Participants of the EGRA Beta Testing Training

Participants	In-Person Attendance	Zoom Online Attendance	TOTAL
<i>Proctors</i>			36
Quezon City	6	6	12
Cavite	-	12	12
Cebu & Cebu City	6	6	12
<i>Observers</i>			12
Quezon City	4	-	4
Cavite	3	1	4
Cebu & Cebu City	2	2	4
<i>SL Interpreters</i>			6
Quezon City	2	-	2
Cavite	2	-	2
Cebu & Cebu City	1	1	2

Due to the DepEd Memorandum in the Division of Cavite that the teachers were not allowed to go out from the schools and attend training or seminars, all 12 Proctors from Cavite were just attending online via Zoom.

But, for the two (2) sites of Quezon City and Cebu, one (1) proctor from each school attended face-to-face while the other one (1) attended via Zoom. During the training, STS Facilitators oriented the participants on the activity and its purposes. She explained the individual roles and responsibilities for the Beta test. At a later hour, participants were given tablets to navigate through Tangerine on the tablet with basic fluency and can guide students through the assessment.

Since no Beta Test tool was ready that time, participants were asked to explore the Alpha test. Participants were asked to portray as student or proctor so that they would have confidence on how to set-up the assessment space.

STS emphasized that the teacher-proctors need to do the following:

- Find an appropriate space for the assessment (limited distractions, good natural light),
- Arrange desk and chair for child so that tablet can be at child eye level,
- Arrange the desk and chair so that that video on the tablet can be captured clearly (any light should be facing child, not behind or on the side of the child),
- When child sits down, introduce yourself and explain about the games, then show him/her the tablet,
- Note the child's unique Tangerine ID on the registration form,
- If the child is stuck on a page and isn't sure how to move on, press "don't know" button and/or "next" button to move the child to the next task,
- If child cannot operate the record function, press the "record" and "stop" buttons,
- Encourage the child to stay seated and continue with the assessment,
- If child is unable to interact with the assessment or is persistent in wanting to end the assessment, terminate the assessment,
- Answer any questions the child has during the assessment; do not provide any assessment answers,
- Tell the child "thank you and good job" and direct the child to the observer for the feedback survey, and
- Submit assessments.

For the Observers and Sign Language Interpreters, STS exclaimed the important things to consider:

- Get a list of the children who will take part in the assessment and their basic demographic information (grade, age) and enter on the registration form,
- Sit to the side of the child and proctor with sufficient space to not interrupt, but should be able to see both the child's interaction with the tablet and see the proctor,
- Fill out observation checklist,
- Administer student feedback survey, and
- Accompany child back to their classroom and bring the next child for the assessment.



STS also introduced the training on the observer survey, teacher survey and student survey, and reminded the participants to administer the survey forms to target persons.

STS divided the participants into two groups for the try-out on how to navigate the tablet and platform, how to set up the tablet for the student, how to upload a student response, and how-to best support students during the assessment.

F. Conduct of Beta Testing in selected 6 schools in each of the Divisions of Quezon City (representing Urban), Cavite (representing Rural) Cebu (representing Rural), and Cebu City (representing Urban) - Sept. 22-23, 26-30, 2022

RBI Gabay assigned documenters and logistics managers per team. They were tasked to coordinate the schools, rooms, and children information with the given student qualifications. RBI Gabay prepared team itineraries. Prior to the Beta test, Gabay verified the schools through the help of DepEd division officials, and arranged the mode of transport for the three teams for accessibility purposes.

RBI Gabay organized the materials prior to departure and verified that all materials were ready and tablets were in working condition. A checklist and a kit of the following were provided to each team:

- Tablets;
- Forms: Observers, Proctors, Students, and etc. provided by STS
- Consent forms (per child);
- Copy of the Letter for DepEd (per site);
- Copy of the itineraries (per staff); and
- Snacks for Kids

Prior to the testing date, RBI Gabay already requested the schools for the three (3) rooms: two (2) testing rooms and one (1) waiting room for the children. A gentle request was also raised for a suitable space and environment where there is no disruption like not allowing teachers to observe the testing. As much as possible, it should be quiet and free from visual distractions. But if no room is available, the team will maximize whatever is present.

The three (3) teams conducted courtesy visits first to the Schools Division Superintendents through the Division Supervisors In-Charge of SPED in the target areas prior actual administrations



Once the team arrives at the school site, they either go to the District Supervisor (if within the schools) and/or to School Principal/School Head. The Gabay members of the team introduced the project and the activity, including how much time they might spend in the school for the assessment.

The School Heads and teachers selected the students average to higher levels of sign language comprehension (either FSL or ASL) to participate in the assessment. Below table 2 shows the number of deaf students assessed by grade level and gender.

Table 37. Number of deaf students in the Beta Test by grade level and sex

Sites	Non Graded		Kinder		Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6		TOTAL		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Quezon City					1		5	4	6	6	8	6	10	3	2	9	32	28	60
Cavite	3						11	8	4	2	9	6	2	4	4	4	33	24	57
Cebu City & Cebu	4	2		1	1		1	2	5	10	5	7	1	8	8	5	25	35	60
TOTAL	7	2	0	1	2	0	17	14	15	18	22	19	13	15	14	18	90	87	177

There were 177 Deaf students who took the Beta Test. Of the total, 60 or 33.9% students from Quezon City and Cebu Sites, while there are 57 or 32.20% from Cavite. There are 90 or 50.84% males and 87 or 49.15% females.

Among the 177 deaf students, the highest numbers belong to Grade 4 with 41 or 23.16% and Grade 3 follows with 33 or 18.64%. Third group goes to Grade 6 deaf students with 32 or 18.08% populations, then Grade 2 is fourth with 31 or 17.51% in numbers. Fifth is Grade 5 with 28 or 15.82% numbers, followed by non-graded deaf students with 9 or 5.08% numbers. The Grade 1 deaf students are 2 or 1.13 %, and only one Kinder with 1 or 0.56%.

Each assessment group in every school site will administer two (2) groups for Forms 1 and 2. Prior to testing the students, the team conducted re-orientation of the forms and scanning through the app tablet for at least 30 minutes to 1 hour. Each team has debriefed sessions with the proctors per school.



G. Training of Scorers- September 24, 2022

There were four (4) scorers per site and all of them are teachers of the deaf. The training was conducted online via Zoom and STS facilitated the training. STS oriented the teachers about the Remote EGRA, since there were additional Scorers added to the three scorers in Alpha Test. STS Ms. Sibal provided some guidelines and score board for them to access and experience how to do the tasks. RBI Gabay also created a group chat via Messenger for all the Scorers so that the STS can attend to their queries immediately and the others would learn as well.

H. Debrief – October 01, 2022

All observers, proctors, SL Interpreters, and Gabay staff were invited online for an hour to discuss their experiences in the Beta Test. STS facilitated the questioning and the following comments, recommendations, suggestions and feedback are discussed in the results and discussions of this report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The two (2) teams, Cavite and Quezon City, started the actual administration on September 22, while the Cebu team started on September 23. The three groups ended the administrations on September 30, 2022. For six (6) days, the team had simultaneous testing in the three (3) scenarios.

Below table shows the outputs, highlights, challenges and recommendations collated from all the teams during debrief sessions after the test per school and on October 1. The discussed items are by topic on proctors, students, tangerine app or tablet concerns, and schools.

Table 38. BETA Test Outputs, Highlights, Challenges and Recommendations

A. Proctors

HIGHLIGHTS	CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS/ LESSONS LEARNED/NEXT STEP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proctors have less support with the rest of the app manipulation because most of the students were independently manipulating the tablet. ● The Proctors supported the promptings and pointing in many cases. ● Proctors did not provide answers to the assessments. ● Proctors understood what to do after 30 mins. to 1-hour orientation with the tablet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Most Proctors explained and assisted the students in gestures, body movements because many had difficulty explaining the instructions to the children in FSL/ASL. ● The Proctors were supporting almost all students positioning in the camera. ● The proctors were a bit nervous in the 1st to 2nd test being aware that they were being observed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● They must know when and where to intervene or assist. ● Proctors play a vital role on this type of test for camera positioning and encouraging the student with “ok go ahead”, “next”, “go on”, etc.

B. Students

HIGHLIGHTS	CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS/ LESSONS LEARNED/NEXT STEP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students who experienced using tablets were having fun using the gadgets and enjoyed watching the videos. They enjoyed the assessment. Many of the students responded with signs like “right”, “yes”, “I understand”, “I know”. A lot of them were engaged and really showed gestures of listening. ● Almost every student responded positively to letter names and receptive subtasks, but they had difficulties in sentence comprehensions and reading. They were engaged except in sentence stories which it seemed they did not understand. ● Still, there were students who were able to answer the SL questions for stories and sentence reading subtasks. ● Most students manipulated the tablet independently and only very few were observed to be hesitant on handling tablets. The students mostly knew how to scroll up and down without the proctor’s guidance. ● Many students mimicked the sign language videos as part of their retention and comprehension. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some children found the video frame of the sentence reading too small and found the sentence stories difficult. ● Some children need proctor assistance in the initial screens, and in scrolling up and down. ● The children seemed to understand what to do but did not know the correct signing. ● They also seemed confused about the process of assessments but still wanted to continue. ● It seemed like they have limited knowledge on sign language as it was hard for them to understand the instructions. ● Most had no problems with table manipulations but instead on understanding the signs. ● In most cases, children asked confirmation from teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The difficulty in the reading comprehension items could be due to the non-exposure of deaf students to printed/video words/phrases/sentences/ stories with sign language. ● Students have potential, given the learning resource materials such as dictionaries on sign language.

HIGHLIGHTS	CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS/ LESSONS LEARNED/NEXT STEP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cebu students were using mostly ASL than FSL. ● Students were like conversing live with the deaf signing, because they responded in gestures like nodding and signing “yes”, right. 		

C. Tangerine: Learn App and Tablet issues

HIGHLIGHTS	CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS/ LESSONS LEARNED/NEXT STEP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demo videos and practice items are helpful for the child’s try-out but they often struggled at the first item of the subtask. But after the first two items and saw how these were done, they were able to follow the remaining items. ● Well-arranged subtasks according to the Proctors ● The test helped the students decide on their own and not get used to asking for confirmation from teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wrong spelling of “tomorrow” ● Big fonts for the word options ● Colors: green and blue were often mistaken as shape being ask ● For students who are not used to using tablets, they often struggle on tapping “next” and the record button. Usually they double tapped or triple tapped before it was being detected. ● Options “now” and “today” which have the same signs for some deaf. ● Students with fast reflexes in answering signs often received 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adding animations, pop-up buttons to instruction videos ● Grade-level appropriateness of the items ● Practice items are unnoticeable, maybe some signs or codes that it is a practice item. ● Sentences in the sentence reading should be in bold fonts and the SL videos asking questions should be larger frames. Question videos should be played later after a few seconds when the sentence appears in bold. ● Unlocking the meaning of the buttons shall be part of the instructions with images along with signs. ● Sentence reading Form 2 can be different from Form 1- it could be

HIGHLIGHTS	CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS/ LESSONS LEARNED/NEXT STEP
	<p>“video is too short” comment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most students could not sign the semi-circle. • It was hard to predict if the students did not press the don’t know button because of non-recognition or trying their best to answer • Expressive language subtask part where the item asked for the sign of “green” but the child responded with the sign of “square”. • Confusing picture of “mother” where they signed the baby instead since the mother is carrying a baby. 	<p>giving options like a. zoom, b. Dan, c. goes, d. where</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate buttons for sentence story from questions • Sequence the items, easy items before comprehension subtask as last.

D. Schools

HIGHLIGHTS	CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS/ LESSONS LEARNED/NEXT STEP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The schools were very supportive of the process. The School Head/OIC visited and checked if everything went smoothly. • The schools prepared a holding area for the students waiting for their turn for testing, and two (2) testing rooms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to schools, since students just got back from home classes, most of them had decreased knowledge on signs. • The team observed that many students were responding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools welcome the innovation and found the process feasible.

HIGHLIGHTS	CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS/ LESSONS LEARNED/NEXT STEP
	<p>confidently even with limited signs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed schedule of the assessments for Cavite and Quezon City because of the typhoon and classes suspended. But the team made adjustments to complete the assessment as scheduled without violating the standard process for testing. 	

D.2 USAID Documentation of Success Stories

In cooperation with DepEd and Sorsogon City Health Office, Gabay Communications Officer and Sorsogon Field Coordinator organized the preparations and determined the potential story heroes last September 8-11 prior the 2-day documentation with USAID.

The 2-Day Documentation was led by USAID AOR Representative, Mr. Henry Grageda together with USAID Documentation, Outreach and Communications (DOC) Writer, Ms. Christina Butler and USAID Social Media Specialist, Mr. Jefferson Danipog. A short meeting and briefing was conducted at Fernandos Hotel in Sorsogon City to discuss the activities including the interviews and flow in Bacon and Castilla.

A. Day 1, September 12, 2022 – Story: Deaf



The 1st day revolved around the story of Janella Espinosa from Bacon, Sorsogon City who was tested by a Gabay Trained Para-audiometrist at Sorsogon City Health Office. After being identified with profound hearing, she was referred to Bacon East Central School (BECS) under a Gabay Trained SPED Teacher.

An interview with her grandmother/guardian was conducted at her home in Bacon. The para-audiometrist who tested her was also visited and interviewed. She gave a demo of the Hearing Test with a child patient at the Sorsogon City East District Health Office – Gabay Hearing Test Center. Janella’s routine in going to school and attending her classes was documented with an interview with her teacher at BECS.



“USAID has helped us especially my granddaughter to learn sign language. I was able to communicate and connect with her easier even with her playmates. The FSL Dictionaries we received was really a big help. “ – Lola Racquel Despabiladero

My message to my fellow health workers is to appreciate and have compassion to others. Do not take for granted those who cannot hear and those who cannot speak. Instead, give importance to those like them. The audiometer we use has a big impact in helping those who cannot hear in our community.” – Ms. Ada Jean Dimaano “

“We use the Filipino Sign Language (FSL). I have actually tried ASL before. But I’m very happy that Gabay and USAID provided us resource materials. Back then, it was hard to look for right resources. I’m not sure if I am teaching the right way or if I am teaching the signs correctly based on what I saw from the internet. So I am very happy that USAID and Gabay came as literally “guide” to ensure that the signs we are learning are correct. The USB distributed has also helped us even the regular teachers. I was able to share it to them saying, “we need receiving teachers for the deaf”. So, I was telling to them that USAID and Gabay are here to help us and we are very thankful.” – T. Jennifer Garcia



B. Day 2, September 13, 2022 – Story: Blind



The 2nd day revolved around the story of Marinel Quides from Castilla, Sorsogon who was screened by a Gabay Trained Community Health Worker during the Mass Eye and Ear Screening last March 2022. When found out that she was not enrolled yet, she was referred to Cumadcad Central School (CCS) under a Gabay Trained SPED Teacher.

An interview with her mother was conducted at her home in Castilla. The Barangay Health Worker President who was there during the mass screening was also interviewed at the Rural Health Unit (RHU) of Castilla which was a walking distance from their home. She also gave a demo of the Eye Screening with a child patient at the RHU. Marinel’s routine in going to school and attending her classes was likewise documented with an interview of her teacher at CCS. After being enrolled this school year, Marinel has stopped going to school for a while due to financial constraints. Upon knowing this, her SPED teacher arranged a flexible schedule and tapped the PDAO and LGU Municipality of Castilla to shoulder her transportation expenses.



“My motivation is when I am able to help these children who have disabilities at the same time serve my community. Children with disabilities might lack and differ with others, but they are doing their best to study. They need education more. Even if they cannot see or hear, what’s important is to achieve their dreams someday” – Ms. Lina Mangampo

“I cannot be there for Marinel forever. My husband and I will grow older. My other kids (her siblings) would soon have their own families. What I want for Marinel, is for her to be guided and independent as she grows. That’s why I am thankful to USAID with all the assistance given to Marinel so she could live a normal life just like any other kid. The materials provided have helped me a lot on how I can teach her determine shapes and numbers. I don’t know that before.”

– Mommy Josephine Legazpi

"I am very much thankful to USAID because when I started in 2018, my mind is black and empty. I have taught 7 years in public school as a regular teacher and I forgot some of my learnings back in college. So I started reading books and browsing the Youtube just to meet my student's needs. Then Resources for the Blind and USAID came into the picture. There I was able to learn Sign Language and Braille. Because of that increased knowledge, we teachers gained, we also have an increased enrolment for this year. If not for USAID, RBI, Gabay, we cannot improve our teaching skills and strategies. Without you, we cannot give proper intervention to our learners. You have helped us big time in improving our SPED program here." – T. Rubie Bernardino



[See X Snapshots/Media Releases](#)

D.3 Year 3 Annual Debriefing Session

The Annual Debriefing Session is a component of the review and reflection activities of Gabay as specified in its Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) cycle. The Annual Debriefing Session is designed to ensure accountability and learning to improve effectiveness of the project implementation. It is likewise intended to discuss sustainability measures of the partner stakeholders as Gabay approaches its final year. It has two components. The first component is the Internal Debriefing and the second is the External Debriefing. The Internal Debriefing is participated by the Gabay Staff while the External Debriefing is participated by the Gabay key stakeholders and partners.

The Year 3 Annual Debriefing Session aims to review the Gabay’s performance for Year 3 (July 2021 to June 2022) and gather perception of partner stakeholders on Gabay project results on its penultimate year.

Specifically, it endeavors to present the initiatives spearheaded by the partner organizations to support Gabay project goal; share lessons learned and generate good practices in project implementation; present plans and activities to be conducted by Gabay for Year 4; and generate inputs and recommendations from partner organizations to strengthen collaboration, institutional partnerships, and policies to support Gabay project goal.

The Y3 Annual Debriefing Session with External Stakeholders was conducted on November 9, 2022 at The Heritage Hotel.



Internal Debriefing

The Internal Debriefing participated by fourteen (14) Gabay staff composed of Chief of Party, Deputy Chief of Party, Finance Manager, Finance Officer, Project Field Manager, Communications Officer, Procurement Officer, and Field Coordinators in the three project

An Internal Stakeholder Debriefing Form was individually accomplished by the members of the Gabay Team. The form used was clustered into three (3) parts.

The first part is the General Observation wherein they have to answer six questions ranging from their overall impression on Gabay's performance, challenges encountered, strategies, innovations, things that could be done differently, and priority areas. The second part was identifying facilitating and hindering factors using the 5Rs and PESTLE models. The third part encouraged the members to reflect on the evaluation questions that Gabay should look into as it prepares for Year 4

Below are the consolidated responses of the Gabay personnel:

a. Findings and Lessons Learned

- i. Gabay's work has been overwhelming yet fulfilling
- ii. Progressive planning and ample time to prepare for the activities is essential for the team
- iii. Gabay has to allocate resources for emergencies and/or disaster relief support
- iv. Gabay has to prioritize on areas relative to project sustainability

b. Facilitating and Hindering Factors

Facilitating Factors

- i. Provision of resources for critical activities and interventions
- ii. Staff's flexibility and willingness to help
- iii. Continued partnerships with DepEd, CSO, and LGU Focal Persons
- iv. Regular conduct of Gabay weekly meetings

Hindering Factors

- i. Limited budget for proposed activities
- ii. Lacking ear and eye specialists available in the project sites
- iii. Difficulty in accessing IECRC for some stakeholders
- iv. Limited personnel to perform multiple tasks
- v. Transition or changes in leadership in LGUs and DepEd
- vi. RBI Policy on financial transactions

External Debriefing

An External Stakeholder Debriefing Form was accomplished by the partners and external stakeholders prior to the actual conduct of the Gabay Year 3 Annual Debriefing. The accomplished forms were consolidated and presented during the session.

The form is composed of three parts. Part I is about the General Observations of the partner-stakeholders. This part includes the activities and strategies employed to achieve the objectives, and mechanisms established that affected the implementation. Gabay also asked for their assessment on the extent of effectiveness of Gabay interventions in increasing access of Blind, Deaf, and DeafBlind learners to inclusive education. Part II is about the partners and stakeholders' lessons learned and good practices in the implementation and their partnership with Gabay.

Part III is about the Priority Areas for Year 4 such as the prevailing environment, implementation arrangements, policies, partnerships, among others that Gabay and the partner stakeholders will work together and Recommendations along these areas were also solicited. There were eleven partner stakeholders and/or organizations that provided their responses. These are SDOs Batangas City, Sorsogon City, Sorsogon, Maasin City, and Southern Leyte, LGUs Batangas City and Sorsogon City, Leyte Island Association for the Deaf (LIAD), Parent Advocates for Visually Impaired Children (PAVIC), and Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) TWG, DeafBlind Support Philippines (DBSP). Below are some of their responses:

Question 1: What is your impression on Gabay's performance for Year 3?

Impression on Gabay's performance for Year 3:

- Gabay played a vital role in the development of Special Education in the Philippines
- Gabay has provided capacity development for teachers and education stakeholders.
- Gabay's performance for the past 3 years is very commendable, admirable and meritorious.

Question 2: What do you think were the activities and strategies that Gabay did well to achieve its objectives?

Activities and Strategies that Gabay did well:

- Provision of capability building activities for education leaders and stakeholders.
- Provision of resource materials for learning needs of learners and equipment for local governments.
- Onsite monitoring and dialogues with partners
- Adapting to remote ways of doing training and technical assistance.

Question 3: What mechanisms were established between your organization/group and Gabay that affected the implementation of the project? How have these mechanisms become effective/not effective?

Mechanisms established between Gabay and Partner Stakeholders:

- Clear term of engagement between Gabay and partners stakeholders
- Proper coordination of Gabay from top management to other stakeholders
- Conduct of community scanning and mapping of areas being served

A detailed Gabay Year 3 Annual Debriefing Report was submitted to USAID/Philippines in November 2022.

D.4 USAID Visits

Sorsogon City

USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator and Acting Senior Coordinator of United States International Basic Education Assistance LeAnna Marr, together with USAID Deputy Mission Director Rebekah Eubanks, USAID Deputy Director of Office of Education, Ms. Yvette Malcioln, and USAID Agreement Officer Representative, Mr. Henry Grageda visited the Sorsogon East Central School last October 18, 2022.

The said visit involved the following activities: i) Read- Along Session for deaf and blind students with their peers, ii) demonstration on the utilization of USAID-donated Braille embossers and other assistive devices for teachers' use at the Inclusive Education Community Resource Center (IECRC), and iii) observations of the Parents' Training

Story Reading at Sorsogon East Central School



Participated by a total of 25 students (14 Regular, 1 Blind, 8 MDVI, 2 Deaf), the Story Reading of *“The Adventures of Abel and Kiko”* was led by DAA LeAnna Marr and DMD Rebekah Eubanks with a Filipino Sign Language Interpreter. Reading Teacher from Bacon East Central School, Ms. Jennifer Garcia started the reading with the song *“The more we read together”*.

To demonstrate inclusion, Blind student, Eunice Poliga read through Braille and Deaf student, Janella Espinosa read through Filipino Sign Language. A modification on the storybook was done through tactile for Erica Dematera, a student with Multiple Disabilities and Visual Impairment (MDVI). The students were very enthusiastic during the reading session together with the USAID, DepEd, School Officials, teachers and their new friends.

Turnover of Learning Resource Materials to the Inclusive Education Community Resource Center (IECRC)



After the story reading, USAID officials headed to the IECRC to visit the center that houses USAID-donated equipment, assistive devices and materials through the Gabay project.

Braille materials production was demonstrated by IECRC custodian / Teacher of the Blind, Ms. Helen Jerus to DAA LeAnna Marr and walked through the assistive devices and Gabay developed modules and materials to DMD Rebekah Eubanks. Deputy Director of OED Yvette Malcioln and AOR Henry Grageda interacted with Superintendents William Gando, Jose Doncillo and Region V SPED Supervisor, Dr. Elisa Suarez. Gabay Chief of Party, Dr. Yolanda Quijano informed officials about the increase in enrolment for Sorsogon and Sorsogon City made possible through the Gabay project initiatives.

A symbolic turnover was conducted to formally endorse Learning Resource Materials for the Blind and Deaf such as the Braille Books, Module, Worksheets and Tactile Materials and the Regional Variation of Filipino Sign Language (FSL) Dictionary along with the Lesson Plans and Activity Sheets for Kindergarten to Grade 3. Before the end of the visit, Sorsogon East Central School Principal, Dr. Ernesto Deyto presented the token of appreciation to DAA LeAnna Marr entitled "*Reading Hands*" made by children with sensorial disabilities with I love you sign in Braille and tactile materials.

Visit to the Parents Training on Supporting Children with Sensorial Disabilities at Villa Isabel Hotel.



The third part of the visit was at the Parents Training on Supporting Children with Sensorial Disabilities where USAID Officials observed and engaged themselves in the Braille Workshop for parents of the blind and Filipino Sign Language Workshop for parents of the deaf.

USAID Officials tried Braille transcription and learned basic signs for numbers, interacted with Blind and Deaf Resource Speakers and parents of blind and deaf children. DAA LeAnna Marr gave a heartfelt message to both of the breakout session groups to encourage parents as the light and voice of their blind and deaf children.

Batangas City

On February 27, 2023, USAID Officials as indicated below visited the Batangas City East Elementary School:

- Ms. Kathryn Booker-Veloz, Senior DEIA Advisor Asia Bureau
- Mr. Jeff Goebel, Director, Office of Economic Development and Governance, USAID/Philippines
- Ms. Yvette Malcioln, Deputy Director, Office of Education, USAID/Philippines

- Ms. Marisol Perez, Embassy DEIA Council Chair/USAID Mission DEIA Steering Group Lead
- Ms. Consuelo Anonuevo, Project Development Specialist, Office of Health, USAID/Philippines/AOR for the ReachHealth Project



They were welcomed by students who are blind and deaf together with RBI Chairperson, Mr. Gary Jamora, Gabay COP, Dr. Yolanda Quijano and Gabay DCOP, Ms. Amy Mojica together with Batangas LGU Officials, Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Oscar Bejasa and Blind Advocate, Mr. Ronnel Del Rio. With them were Batangas City Schools Division Superintendent, Dr Felizardo Bolaños, Batangas City Division Supervisor-In-Charge of SPED, Dr. Rosalina Panganiban and Batangas City East Elementary School Principal, Dr. Amparo Perez who escorted them to the Inclusive Education Community Resource Center (IECRC).

A tour on the IECRC was conducted with four (4) stations showing the Gabay resources and interventions provided to students, teachers, parents, and the community.

i. Learning Resources and Advocacy Materials



The first station was a tour on the references, learning resources and advocacy materials developed and produced by Gabay for children with sensorial disabilities, their teachers, parents and stakeholders within the community.

ii. Learning Materials for the Blind



It was followed by the demonstration of Braille production using the equipment by the Gabay trained teacher of the blind, Ms. Gaudelina Eborra while her Grade 1 student who is blind, Scarlette Lara read materials produced in Braille format. Improvised materials and resources made by teachers to teach braille were also presented. Through the equipment such as braille embosser, scanner, printer and brailier, teachers can easily produce braille materials for learners and parents who are blind.

iii Learning Materials for the Deaf



On the other hand, Gabay trained teacher of the deaf, Ms. Rose'ann Macaraig showed how the Filipino Sign Language (FSL) dictionaries and stories are being useful on their classes. Together with her students who are deaf, they demonstrated some signs learned through the FSL resources to increase reading proficiency.

iv Hearing Aid Fitting Demonstration



The last station was the demonstration of the Hearing Aid Fitting / Audiological Demonstration by Dr. Ronald Menor to a child with hearing impairment.

Grade 2 student, Marcus from Cuenca Central School was the recipient of one of the hearing aids donated at the H/ATC and was tested by the trained Para-Audiometrists at the Batangas Provincial Health Office. He was having difficulties with high frequency sounds which is very important in learning English such as the concept of possessive pronoun and plural form using the letter “s”. With the help of the hearing aids, he is able to access these sounds which would be helpful to him in listening to his teacher during class lessons.

“We in USAID, especially in the Education Office are so proud of this project and I am so happy that I was able to share it with some of my colleagues in Washington. The importance of this Gabay project, we call it the little engine that COULD..because financially it was one of the smallest projects, but had a huge impact including tripling the enrolment to its project sites. – Ms. Yvette Malcioln



The visit ended with a short but motivating message from the USAID Office of Education, Deputy Director, Ms. Yvette Malcioln.

E. PROCUREMENT

I.T. Equipment and Supplies Procured

- RENEWAL Zoom Account 1 Year Subscription (1 Meeting Room with 100 Participant Capacity) Under Shev.gabay@blind.org.ph's Account.
- 1 account of RBI GABAY Account - Google Cloud Storage Renewal for 200GB of Online Storage, the online storage is about to expire on Sep 11, 2022
- 2 units Dual Ports USB C Hub to HDMI USB 3.1 Data Type-C +TF SD Slot VGA Adapter for MacBook AIR
- 4 units Wireless Mouse Brand: A4 Tech Model : G3-300N Black Vtrack Padless for Staff used (Michelle, Nitz, Maui 1 buffer)

- 2 units Laptop model: Lenovo IdeaPad Slim 3 Ryzen 5 issued as service unit for Project officer Justine Barcenas and for Trainings
- 10 units Power Bank for Staff, Brand: Anker Power core III 10k storage, issued as service unit for Field Coordinators, Finance Team and Communications Officer for use during field works /training
- 3 units Seagate One Touch 1TB External Hard Drive HDD – Silver USB 3.0 compatible with PC Laptop and Mac (STKB2000402) for the Communications Officer and 2 field coordinators
- 3 pcs. SD Card for DSLR 128GB SanDisk for additional documentary storage use

Printing Learning Materials for DedED, enrolled Deaf Student and Teachers Procured

- Gabay Accomplishment (Y1-Y3) 2 Fold Flyers
- 500 copies of FSL Alphabets Posters Board 18"x 24" Foldcote 15, from service provider, KR Printing.
- 25 copies of The Adventures of Abel and Kiko (Revised Pages), KR Printing.
- 100 copies Gabay Accomplishment (Y1-Y3) 2 Fold Flyer Material: C2S 160 Full Color glossy Pages: 6 (3 folded) Front and Back Size: Letter from service provider, EJESS Trading.
- 500 pcs. Personalized USB (Business Card Type) with USAID Name for FSL Story (64GB) Slim type USB, playable in Smart TV, Computer/Laptops.
- 200 Kindergarten and 200 Grade 1 Batangas Regional Variation of FSL Dictionary
- 150 Kindergarten and 150 Grade 1 Sorsogon Regional Variation of FSL Dictionary
- 100 Reprinted Gabay Flyers (Year 3 Accomplishment)
- 300 pcs each Posters for Braille Poster, Anti-Human Trafficking Poster, Environment Poster, Gender Poster

PEEC Training for Community Health Workers - Batangas Procured

- 150 sets Mini Oscope with Penlight and Battery

For the Safety and Protection Protocol per Company/Organization Policy on COVID19 Procured

- 14 pax COVID-19 RTPCR Swab Test, August 12, 2022.

- 2 lot Gabay Office Fumigation Sanitation Treatment for the Month of July 11, 2022 August 15, 2022.
- 1 lot Gabay Staff Boarding House Fumigation & Sanitation Treatment September 19, 2022
- 6 boxes COVID 19 - SWAB TEST KIT Brand: NASAL SWAB TEST KIT (25sets) per box
- 1 lot Gabay Office Fumigation Sanitation Treatment for the December 2, 2022.
- 6 boxes Facemask KN95 50/pack and 9 Facemask 3ply 50/pack supplies used for Inauguration of IECRC-Batangas and school visit -SORSOGON
- 4 boxes Alcohol 1000ml and 6 boxes Facemask KN95 50/pack supplies used for SENERGEIA activity (Exposure & Training) & EGRA Training

Various Office Supplies and Janitorial Materials Procured

- Sets Cleaning Materials and Office & Janitorial Supplies for the month of July-Dec. 2022; Jan.-June 2023
- 50 reams Bond Paper Letter size (10 boxes x 5 reams) 80gsm, Sub 24, 8.5' x 11' Brand: A+, Papertime Enterprises.
- Training materials Kit & Office supplies for Teachers Training & Synergeia activities in 3 project sites

Accommodation, Airfare and Van Rental Procured

- 131 pax Airfare Philippine Airlines travel Aug. 2022 to April 2023 for the various activities
- 131 pax Travel Insurance for various activities from Aug. 2022 to April 2023
- 150 nights Room Accommodation of 131 pax for various activities from Aug. 2022 to April 2023
- Van rentals for travel of 140 pax for various activities from Aug. 2022 to April 2023
- Rental of Function Rooms of hotels for training activities from Aug. 2022 to April 2023

R & M (repair and maintenance) Service

- KOLIN FLOOR STANDING - KLG-SF40-3D13-1 (Centralized AC @Gabay Office)
1 set GENERAL CLEANING FOR FLOOR STANDING
- 2 units Gabay Office Aircondition Unit MIDEA SPLIT TYPE – Cleaning (@Conference rooms)
- EPSON PRINTER - Accounting used L5190 - SN. X5NY34301 repair and maintenance, Servitek.
- 13 pax Annual Health Plan renewal to Maxicare Gold Regular Private Maximum Benefit Limit of Php 150,000.00

- 15 FT/6 Wheelers closed Van Truck with 2 helpers and driver inclusion of Diesel for June 23, 2023 pick-up of equipment from ClaimDev Office to RBI office

F. HUMAN RESOURCE

The project continued with 14 staff under the supervision of the Chief of Party and the Deputy Chief of Party. One of Gabay’s senior field coordinators, Ms. Maricar Gabriel was assigned as the Training Officer, providing direct support and coordination with the Project Field Manager and Field Coordinators making the training planning and implementation more systematic specifically the trainings on Braille Reading and Writing, and Educating Learners who have Multi-Disabilities and Visual Impairment (MDVI) and Deafblindness.

Gabay maintained the part time data management staff to consistently update the project’s database on regular basis. To support the technology aspect need of the project, Gabay considered sharing the personnel cost of RBI’s IT staff based on his level of effort. As Gabay was ending it maintained this set up and no longer hired a fulltime IT staff. Gabay sustained to outsource consultants and part-time workers in response to the lack of manpower. Below is Gabay’s organizational chart for Year 4.

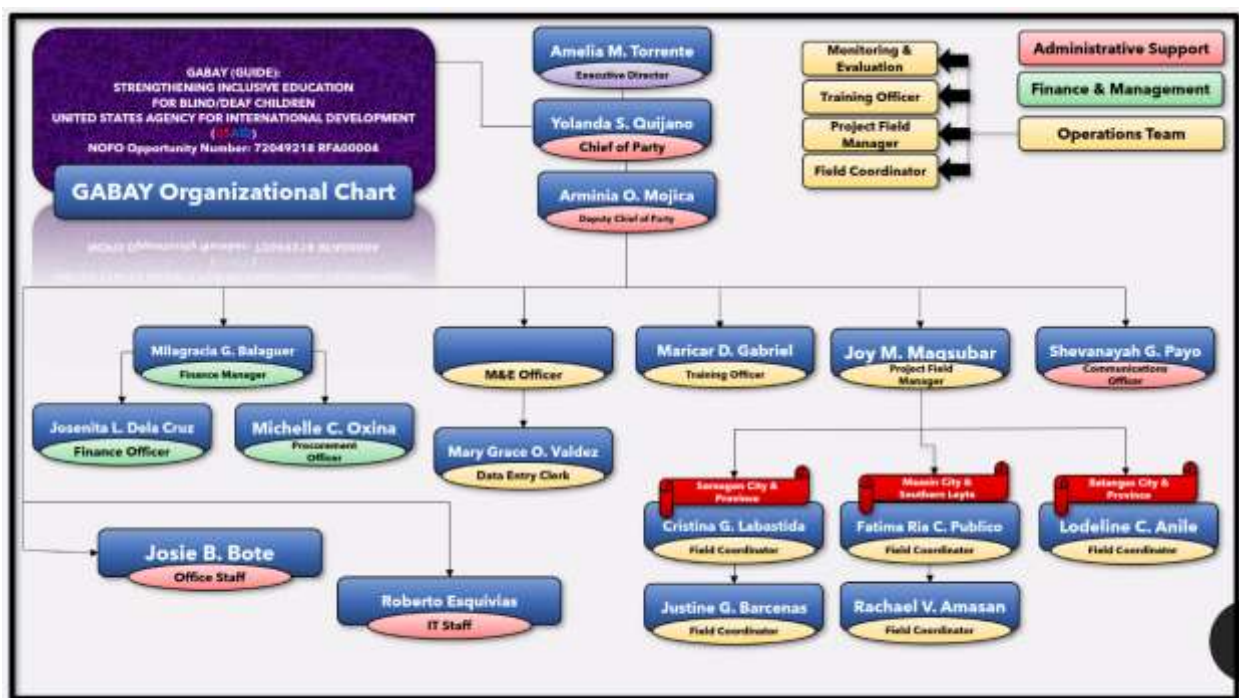


Figure 9. Gabay’s Organizational Chart for Year 4

Gabay's Year 4 implementation concentrated in field visits and face-to-face training as the resumption of the in-person classes started last November 2022. Prior to Gabay's back to field activities, Gabay carefully planned essential means to protect the staff and people in the field. Staff were required to visit the Gabay health care provider to ensure that staff were in good health and safe when connecting with teachers, parents and children on the ground. Staff although vaccinated, were required to bring with them in the field an antigen kit, protective measures and still observed social distancing.

The regular weekly Monday meetings continued, to monitor and discuss the progress of the project activities regularly. Urgent meetings were still called when deemed necessary. The overall supervision and monitoring of the project were headed by the COP and DCOP. The monthly plan of activities and highlights were reported to the Executive Director, and a regular report about the project was presented on the RBI's Board of Trustees' quarterly meeting. At the last quarter of year 4, the Gabay Management submitted a Year 5 Project Extension to USAID, with a competitive salary allocation for a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. Screening of applicants were done, while waiting for the approved project extension. Selected applicant was recall for a final interview upon approval of the project extension. Thus, a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, completed the 15 Gabay staff to implement the 18-month extension of the project.

IV. STATUS OF MILESTONE DELIVERED

Table 39. Milestone Accomplished for Year 4 (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023)

Milestone #	Milestone	Date Submitted to USAID	Date Fund is credited in Bank	Amount
Milestone 25	Data Collectors Training in Administering Surveys, FGD and KIIS	July 07, 2022	July 18, 2022	1,387,011.00
Milestone 33	1. Technical Report in Addressing the Additional Priorities of the Two Target Schools in Follow up in the Implementation of Quality Indicators (Phase 1) 2. Mentoring School Administrators on Addressing Priorities from Program Quality Indicators Implementation	August 12, 2022	September 5, 2022	2,267,512.00
Milestone 34	Year 4 Annual Work plan	August 17, 2022	September 8, 2022	2,267,512.00
Milestone 35	1. Skills training on Deafness and Blindness for Parents and Teachers of Children with Sensorial Disabilities 2. Mentoring School Administrators on Addressing Priorities from Program Quality Indicators Implementation (Phase 2)	September 28, 2022	October 19, 2022	5,258,719.00
Milestone 32	Year 3 Annual debriefing and evaluation of project implementation	November 16, 2022	December 1, 2022	5,184,164.00
Milestone 28	TW3 - Development of manual of operations for IE/CRC model	December 01, 2022	December 14, 2022	3,579,717.00
Milestone 27	Organize Surveys, FGDs, Klls, Data Collection and Oversee Data Capture	December 15, 2022	January 16, 2023	693,506.00

Milestone #	Milestone	Date Submitted to USAID	Date Fund is credited in Bank	Amount
Milestone 14	Approved RBI Office Manuals	December 21, 2022	January 23, 2023	4,984,300.00
Milestone 37	Training of Assessors and Scorers in the Reading Assessment for Deaf and Blind Children	May 05, 2023	June 01, 2023	1,661,014.00
Milestone 38	Administration of Reading Assessment for Deaf and Blind Children	May 16, 2023	June 08, 2023	1,107,342.00
Total Milestones amount received in Year 4				28,390,797.00

V. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR TRACKING TABLE

The table below presents the performance of Gabay for four (4) years of its implementation from July 2019 to June 2023 against its Life of Project (LOP) targets in June 2023. **Gabay Accomplishments from Year 1 to Year 4 (as of June 30, 2023)**

Table 40. Gabay Performance Indicator Tracking Table Year 4

Intermediate Result	Performance Indicator	Targets					Gabay Accomplishments from Year 1 to Year 4 (as of <u>June 30, 2023</u>)								
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Life of Project (LOP)	Q1-Q4	Q5-Q8	Q9-Q12	Q13 (Jul - Sept 2022)	Q14 (Oct - Dec 2022)	Q15 (Jan - Mar 2023)	Q16 (Apr - Jun 2023)	Year 4 Accomplishment as of June 2023	Percentage Accomplishment vs LOP Target
IR 1: Improved enrollment of blind, deaf and deaf-blind children	ES.1-56 Number of learners with improved access to education through USG- assisted programs (formerly Number of referred children enrolled at DepEd School)	60	120	60	0	240	0	125	87	0	30	3	0	245	102.08 %
	Percent increase in enrollment of children with sensorial disabilities	+33.33% (135 +45 new CSDs)	+66.67% (180 +45 new CSDs)	+100% (225 +45 new CSDs)	0	+100% (135 CSDs)	+22.22 %	+156.29 %	+191.85 %	0	319.26 %		0	319.26 %	-
Outcome 1: Increased referrals of blind, deaf and deaf-blind children	Number of referred children for enrollment	100	200	100	0	400	0	202	147	0	30	25	0	404	101.00 %

not in school to DepEd															
Output 1: Increased capacity of health service providers to screen children	Number of Community Health Workers with improved scores	252	338	225	0	815	92	390	228	158	0	0	0	868	106.50 %
Output 2: Increased number of children screened for visual and hearing impairments	Number of children screened	600	1200	600	0	2400	281	1412	1247	214	91	0	0	3245	135.21 %
IR 2: Improved reading performance among blind and deaf learners	Reading scores for EGRA - HI	Base line Data	0	0	Endline Data		Baseli ne Summ ary Memo	0	0	0	0	0	0		
	ES 1.8-1 Number of local basic education policies or deliberated with inputs from USAID supported analyses/databases (formerly Number of DepEd policies adopting Gabay modules and materials)	0	2	2	0	4	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	5	125.00 %

Outcome 1: Increased access of deaf and blind learners to learning materials	Number of children with sensorial disabilities reached with USG assistance	600	1500	0	165	2265	567	1630	1318	396	103	0	0	4014	177.22 %
	ES.1-3 Number of learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG assistance	600	1371	0	165	2136	272	1140	808	224	30	0	0	2474	115.82 %
Outcome 2: Improved capacity of teachers to teach blind and deaf learners	Number of teachers developed new and appropriate teaching strategies / methods for blind and deaf learners	150	150	75	0	375	0	150	110	14	108	25	1	408	108.80 %
Outcome 3: Improved capacity of DepEd to develop reading interventions for blind and deaf learners	Number of reading interventions developed for blind and deaf learners	150	150	200	0	500	4	150	320	87	103	31	9	704	140.80 %
	Supp 7 Number of parents or community members trained to support children's education with USG assistance	0	0	100	150	250	0	0	119	41	90	35	0	285	114.00 %
Output 1: Increased availability of assistive technology for blind and deaf learners	Number of learners using assistive learning devices	128	145	162	0	435	0	136	223	35	0	60	0	454	104.37 %

Output 2: Increased capacity to develop learning materials for blind and deaf learners	ES.1-10 Number of primary or secondary textbooks and other teaching and learning materials (TLM) provided with USG assistance (formerly Number of primary or secondary textbooks and other teaching and learning materials (TLMs) that are inclusively representative provided with USG assistance)	5000	1400	150	0	6550	0	2040	3034	3172	0	61	325	8632	131.79 %
Output 3: Improved capacity of DepEd officials and teachers to conduct reading assessment to deaf learners	ES.1-6 Number of educators who complete professional development activities with USG assistance	200	200	100	0	500	217	199	127	84	21	73	0	775	155.00 %
	ES.1-12 Number of education administrators and officials who complete professional development activities with USG assistance	50	50	50	0	150	59	30	60	8	0	8	0	199	132.67 %
							0	0	0						

IR 3: Improved local government attention to the needs of children with sensorial disabilities	Number of inclusive-education policies created by LGUs	0	3	6	0	9	0	3	3	0	0	3	0	9	100.00 %
	Number of LGUs with resource allocations for children with disabilities	0	3	6	0	9	0	3	3	0	1	1	0	8	88.89%
	Number of new resource centers	0	1	2	0	3	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3	100.00 %
Outcome 1: Improved capacity of parents/ disabled people's orgs. (DPOs)/ civil society orgs. (CSOs) to engage local governments	Number of LGU engagement plans developed by parents/ DPOs/ CSOs/peers	3	6	0	0	9	3	7	0	0	0	0	0	10	111.11 %
	ES.1-13 Number of parent teacher associations (PTAs) or community-based school governance structures engaged in primary or secondary education supported with USG assistance	6	12	0	0	18	0	30	0	0	0	0	0	30	166.67 %
Output 1: Increased knowledge of parents/DPOs/CSOs on sensorial disabilities and children's rights	Number of individuals participating in trainings with increased knowledge of sensorial disabilities and children's rights	90	90	0	0	180	68	404	107	111	0	51	0	741	411.67 %

Output 2: Increased knowledge of parents/DPOs/CSOs on Local Government policies and services	Number of individuals participating in trainings with increased knowledge of LGU policies and services	355	355	0	150	860	68	404	107	111	0	147	28	865	100.58 %
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The table above shows that twenty-one (21) out of the twenty-three (23) indicators have reached 100% or more accomplishments at the end of Year 4. For the remaining two (2) indicators, it will be achieved in the early part of Year 5. The endline result of the EGRA for Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing is being processed and will be available for presentation soon. Gabay is also closely working with partner LGUs for the resource allocation for children with sensorial disabilities. Gabay has already provided partner LGUs with support for improving their services for children with sensorial disabilities.

VI. INTEGRATION OF CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND USAID FORWARD PRIORITIES

A. Gender Equality and Female Empowerment

Gabay continues to adhere to gender equality and female empowerment. The project has not violated women's rights and not discriminated against any gender in all its interventions recognizing equality between men and women, boys and girls.

Gabay continues to abide to Gender Equality by recognizing that men and women, boys and girls are treated the same way. Gabay continues to practice no discrimination in providing service to its partners, both men and women, with or without disability have the same access to information, participation, and services in the project activities.

Several activities of Gabay in Year 4 were participated by mostly women. It can be observed that women played a very crucial role in developing capacities of children with sensorial disabilities. Data have shown that women are at the forefront of ensuring inclusive quality education is provided to their children and learners.

In the conduct of the training on Primary Eye and Ear Care (PEEC) for CHWs, 150 over 159 or 95% of the participants were females. In the Vision and Hearing Screening conducted this quarter, 88 girls were screened by the CHWs. It can be observed during the skills training that female figures have been influential to the education of children with deafblindness and MDVI. Forty-five (45) out of 46 teachers and parents who participated in the activity were females. Parents Training on Supporting Children with Sensorial Disabilities in Sorsogon and Batangas, women were greatly represented. In Batangas, 36 out of 45 or 80% were women while in Sorsogon is 50 out of 52 or 96% were women. It can be noted also that during the training, both mother and father played multiple roles for their children was emphasized.

In Gabay's effort to mainstream gender and development, Sex-Disaggregated Data (SDD) is continuously practiced in its data collection methodology and analysis and other appropriate reports.

A poster for gender advocacy was posted at the RBI office and distributed to Gabay project sites.

The current workforce of Gabay is composed of 14 females (93%) and 1 male (7%). Gabay's two highest leadership positions are occupied by strong and empowered women.



B. Sustainability Mechanisms

Anchored on the gains of the project, the team maintains its close coordination with partner LGUs, DepEd, and other organizations in the project sites.

As part of the Gabay's aim to increase capacities of partners to ensure sustainability of the project, trained CHWs and Para-Audiometrists have taken various efforts to embed in their usual responsibilities screening of children suspected to have sensorial disabilities. It can be noted that LGU officials from the executive and legislative offices were present in the Disability Sensitivity Awareness Orientation to which they have been in coordination with members of the Gabay team for the issuance of policies to sustain the gains of the project in their respective municipalities.

Gabay has also been consistent in involving key players in the project sites by partnering with Synergeia Foundation. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) for the Program and Services Supporting the Education of Children with Sensorial Disabilities was conducted in the project sites to have an in-depth understanding about the existing education needs of the children with sensorial disabilities. Resource persons provided inputs also in strengthening and reinventing Local School Boards in the project sites. The data collected was used in developing the training module specific for local school board programs and services. This module was utilized during the conduct of exposure visits and training on improving education services for children with sensorial disabilities was conducted.

Gabay invited local officials and members of the Local School Boards from the project sites to visit the Valenzuela SPED Center and Batino Elementary School and had dialogue with key players in providing education services for benchmarking. At the end of their activities, participants from six (6) LGUs crafted their plans to ensure sustainability of Gabay and improvement of services for persons with disabilities, particularly children in their areas.

In addition, the IECRC Manual and A/HTC Guidelines presented to DepEd, LGUs, and other stakeholders ensure that the established resource and hearing test centers will be managed well, maintained, and benefited by the people in the project sites.

The wider representation during the Annual Debriefing session of project stakeholders also signifies the involvement and aspiration for sustaining the contribution and initiatives of Gabay partners for children with sensorial disabilities.

Moreover, Program Quality Indicator (PQI) Report submitted by Perkins International containing the results, findings and recommendations of the support and technical assistance provided by Gabay will serve as reference for the development of roadmaps to improve education services for children with sensorial disabilities specifically those with multiple disabilities.

The EGRA Endline Data Collection activities and results of the assessment will be used for policy enhancement and improvement of services to ensure that reading performance of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing learners will continuously improve. Lessons, good practices, and strategies in the reading performance assessment of EGRA will serve as guide in developing more programs for learners with other disabilities.

Gabay hopes to ensure that sustainability mechanisms will be in place after four (4) years of the project's implementation.

C. Environmental Compliance

Gabay Team is ensuring that no environmental laws are violated in the conduct of its activities. Gabay coordinated with the local health offices of the partner LGUs to ensure adherence to local protocols and policies with regard to COVID-19 particularly during vision and hearing screening, and audiological testing where it gathered children and members of the community. A poster for environment advocacy was also posted at the RBI office and distributed to Gabay project sites.



D. Global Climate Change

Recognizing the possible ill effects of climate change to target beneficiaries, Gabay Team continues to include topics on disaster management in its training modules. Gabay has also been adaptive when DepEd announced to halt afternoon classes due to the rising heat index during the EGRA Endline Evaluation in April 2023. Gabay maintained its online file storage in case disaster will distress the physical structures of the project.

E. Local Capacity Building

Gabay-trained Teachers and Community Health Workers (CHWs) have made significant accomplishments also this quarter. Trained teachers from Silago Central School conducted re-echo training on handling Learners with Sensorial Disabilities in their school using the Gabay materials provided. Trained nurses of Maasin City Division also conducted vision and hearing screening last August 2022 in their covered schools using the materials provided by Gabay.

Gabay through its partner Audiologist has been persistent in developing the capacities of Community Health Workers (CHWs) and Para-Audiometrists to hearing and audiological services for people in the project sites.

Gabay continues to provide capacity building activities for Parents in supporting education of their children with sensorial disabilities including parents and teachers of children with deafblindness and MDVI which are necessary to ensure that these children are provided with appropriate interventions.

Likewise, mentoring activities on Filipino Sign Language were continued to further increase the stakeholders capacities. At the same time, the production of FSL Stories in video format was provided as additional intervention for the development of FSL skills of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing children, their parents and their teachers. Other teaching and learning materials provided to covered schools were also utilized to increase capacities of teachers and learners.

The IECRCs in Batangas City, Sorsogon City, and Maasin City will surely increase the capacities of the teachers and learners with sensorial disabilities in developing, producing, and utilizing materials in accessible formats in their schools and nearby areas. The classroom observations and monitoring activities in Sorsogon and Southern Leyte are interventions that will increase capacities of teachers in teaching learners with disabilities. The technical assistance provided by Gabay and its consultants and specialists are essential components in ensuring that inclusive education is adhered and practiced.

The FGDs with partners conducted represent the mutual respect and benefits that Gabay is advocating. These are the overarching principles that Gabay believes in capacitating the local partners. In partnership with Synergeia, Gabay has capacitated Local Officials and Local School Board Members in improving their services for children with disabilities.

VII. STAKEHOLDERS PARTICIPATION

A. INTERNAL

1. GABAY LEVEL

The Gabay Team, consisting of 14 staff has been working together with the project implementation of activities in its 4th Year. With more training activities conducted in Year 4, a Training Officer was assigned and a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer was added to the team for the implementation of the proposed Year 5 extension for 18 months.

The Gabay Team, headed by Chief of Party, Dr. Yolanda Quijano and Deputy Ms. Arminia O. Mojica regularly reported to the Board of Trustees during meetings to update its members.

2. RBI LEVEL

Transition Back to Office Work

The Resources for the Blind, Inc. (RBI) has announced that its employees will be allowed to return to office work in February 2022. This decision was taken after considering the recommendations of a committee and the Board of Trustees set up to review the work from home (WFH) policy.

RBI has also purposed that employees will have to follow all the COVID-19 protocols which include the following measures:

- Ensure that all staff are vaccinated against COVID-19.
- Provide masks and other personal protective equipment to all staff.
- Encourage social distancing and handwashing.
- Require staff to report any symptoms of illness immediately.
- Conduct regular cleaning and disinfection of all surfaces.
- Implement a staggered return to office schedule to reduce the number of people in the office at any one time.
- Provide adequate ventilation in all areas of the office.
- Monitor the situation closely and make adjustments as needed.

By taking these measures, RBI helped protect the staff from COVID-19 and ensure a safe and healthy return to work.

Completion of the USAID – RBI Agreed Upon Procedures (AUP)

At the start of Quarter 13, RBI concentrated on completing and fulfilling the Agreed Upon Procedures (AUP) set up by USAID and RBI. The AUPs were designed to ensure that RBI was meeting the requirements of the USAID-funded project. RBI worked closely with USAID and Ramon F. Garcia & Company, CPAs (Crowe Philippines) to ensure that all of the AUPs were completed on time and to the satisfaction of USAID.

USAID and RBI's AUPs covered a wide range of areas, including financial reporting, procurement procedures, human resources, project management and RBI's sustainability. Although RBI was delayed in fulfilling the AUPs, it successfully completed the AUPs last Dec. 21, 2022, and USAID was satisfied with RBI's performance based on the report provided by Crowe Philippines. The AUP between USAID and RBI's major output is the completion of the following operational manuals:

1. Financial Management and Internal Control System Manual
2. Human Resources Policies and Procedures Manual
3. Procurement Policies and Procedures Manual
4. Project Management Manual

These Manuals provide guidance and direction for the implementation of the Gabay project and other project run by RBI, and will help to ensure that the project is managed in a transparent and accountable manner. The completion of these manuals is a significant milestone to RBI, and it is a testament to the hard work and dedication of all involved. Overall, the AUP helped Resources for the Blind, Inc. significantly in internal control system and organizational sustainability in the following ways:

- identify and assess risks in its operations,
- develop and implement control measures to mitigate the risks,
- monitor the effectiveness of the control measures,
- improve its overall governance and risk management practices,
- comply with regulatory requirements, and
- build public confidence in its operations.

3. iSEND LEVEL

Gabay has been continuously working with the iSEND Network. Parent Advocates for Visually Impaired Children (PAVIC), DeafBlind Support Philippines (DBP), and Better Hearing Philippines (BHP) have shown support to Gabay in multiple occasions and served as resource persons in several activities including the following:

Parent Advocates for Visually Impaired Children (PAVIC)	DeafBlind Support Philippines (DBP)	Better Hearing Philippines (BHP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring and Technical Assistance to Teachers and Parents handling Multiple Disabilities with Visual Impairment (MDVI) in Sorsogon City. • Parents Training on Supporting Children with Sensorial Disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills Training for Parents and Teachers of children with deafblindness and MDVI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Eye and Ear Care Training for Community Health Workers • Technical assistance and refresher training to para-audiometrist in the Hearing / Audiological Test Centers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 3 Annual Debriefing session to which their inputs were very valuable especially in further strengthening efforts towards inclusive education for children with sensorial disabilities. • Presentation of IECRC Operations Manual and H/ATC Operational Guidelines where they provided inputs as validators in its development 		

B. EXTERNAL

1. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1.1 Central Office

The Department of Education remained steadfast in giving their utmost and invaluable support to Gabay. As forefront partner of Gabay, it continued to provide help and resources to ensure that Gabay activities are meaningfully done in their areas. Throughout the process, Gabay ensured that DepEd was involved from the beginning through meetings, development workshop activities and training to develop the sense of ownership as well as capacitate DepEd's middle managers and teachers. Major activities in IR2 were all under the efforts and collaboration of this partner institution.

DepEd Central officials were very supportive in Gabay capacity building activities specifically the Student Inclusion Division, Bureau of Learning Delivery who were present in Gabay series of activities especially during the Finalization of the IECRC Operations Manual.

The new DepEd Secretary, Hon. Vice President Sara Duterte gave her virtual special message during the Gabay Year 3 Annual Debriefing together with Alternative Learning System Assistant Secretary G.H. Ambat representing Curriculum and Instruction, and Governance & Field Operations Undersecretary Revsee Escobedo. The Debriefing was also attended by DepEd Project Management Service Director IV, Dr. Milagros Talinio.

Key officials from DepEd Central Office shall still be invited to the Gabay Annual Debriefing for Year 4 on August 30, 2023.

1.2 Regional Office

Gabay has always coordinated with the participation of the project sites' DepEd Regional Offices. The Directors and officials of DepEd Region IV-A for Batangas, DepEd Region V for Sorsogon and DepEd Region VIII for Southern Leyte has provided multiple levels of support in the project sites during the Braille Reading Assessment, EGRA Endline Evaluation and Monitoring Visits of Gabay. As major key players, they continued to provide help and resources to ensure that Gabay activities are meaningfully done in their areas of supervision.

1.3 Division Office

DepEd Division Offices of Batangas City and Batangas, Sorsogon City and Sorsogon and Maasin City and Southern Leyte have shown their support every time Gabay project conducts its trainings, workshops and focus group discussions.

It is through the collaboration of the Schools Divisions Superintendents and DepEd officials that Gabay's activities involving the children, teachers, and parents were conducted in the target sites. The Schools Divisions warmly welcome the Gabay Team during the field monitoring and USAID visits. During these visits, they were generous to provide their insights for the enhancement of project implementation and establishment of resource centers to cater to many children with sensorial disabilities in the locality.

They often expressed their desire to extend the Gabay project for more services and programs for CSDs. DepEd's participation was beneficial in ensuring that stakeholders' involvement are amplified to deliver educational services that will empower children and learners with disabilities.

2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS

2.1 Batangas City and Province

The Local Government of Batangas has given their support to the Gabay Project. LGU Officials in the Social Welfare and Development Office, Health Office, PDAO Office have still maintained in close coordination with Gabay during activities with discussion of rights of children with disabilities and local services for persons with disabilities. Hon. Governor Hermilando Mandanas was very supportive during the inauguration of its A/HTC where help and provision of resources were committed in its operationalization. Local School Board Members from the Municipalities of Padre Garcia and Rosario, Batangas were involved during the activities with Synergeia in improving programs for their CSDs

2.2 Sorsogon City and Province

Sorsogon's Local Government has fully engaged and supported Gabay activities in Year 4. Gabay appreciates the support given by Local Chief Executives, Prieto Diaz Municipal Mayor, Hon. Romeo Domasian and Bulusan Municipal Mayor, Hon. Michael Guysayko with its LSB Members in the Focus Group Discussions, Exposure Visits and Training of LGU Officials. City and Provincial governments of Sorsogon have immensely supported the continuous audiological testing conducted in their province where Gabay has produced one of its success stories together with USAID.

2.3 Maasin City and Southern Leyte

In partnership with the Local Government of Maasin headed by City Mayor, Hon. Nacional Mercado had shown immense support during the inauguration of its A/HTC along with Vice Governor, Hon. Rosa Mercado. Most of Southern Leyte municipalities have provided assistance to children and their families who were involved in the audiological tests. Gabay has also tapped the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office for the training of community leaders in their areas. In the same way, the training for the Municipality of San Juan Local School Board Members were supported along with Municipality of Macrohon Hon. Mayor Alan Jose Aroy.

These are manifestations of the unwavering commitment of these partners to ensure that long-term needs of children with sensorial disabilities will be met.

3. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) & Disabled People Organizations (DPOs)

As Gabay's allies to champion quality and inclusive education, CSOs/DPOs served as panelists and resource persons on the Parents Training. Local CSOs/DPOs including PDAO in the chosen six (6) Municipalities were able to attend Synergeia Activities to ensure that inclusive education and well-being of children with sensorial disabilities are protected. They are Gabay's reliable partners in ensuring that the needs of children with sensorial disabilities are addressed.

4. Parents

Parents of children with deafblindness and MDVI were trained by Gabay to improve their skills in supporting and educating their children. An initiative that many of them received for the first time. Parents and Parent Groups have participated also in the dialogue with PAVIC for their mutual support to the project. They also participated in the Synergeia activities to give voice to their CSDs. During the Parents Training on Supporting Education of CSDs, parents of children with sensorial disabilities were invited to share their experiences and give inspiration for all participants on how to support and take care of their children.

They have been provided with skills training on Filipino Sign Language and Braille Reading and Writing to strengthen their support in developing communication skills and reading of their children. A significant number of parents attended to these training which resulted to more increase in enrolment because of Gabay's advocacy.

C. USAID/PHILIPPINES SUPPORT

USAID/Philippines continued to build up and strengthen the capacities of the Resources for the Blind, Inc. (RBI) and Gabay Team. Gabay is beyond grateful to the USAID team for their recognition on its accomplishments specifically on the increased enrolment of children with sensorial disabilities and its development activities on accessible learning resources.

The leadership of Mr. Henry Grageda, AOR in the implementation of the project has motivated the team not only in accomplishing the project activities promptly but also in creating innovative strategies to attain its goal and objectives. He has been an instrument in making USAID's top management and other organizations noticed Gabay's efforts in influencing parents and the LGUs for their ardent support in the educational process of the CSDs.

For Year 4, USAID Mission Director, Mr. Ryan Washburn was able to join Gabay and inaugurate the H/ATC and IECRC in Batangas. The team is likewise appreciative to Dr. Thomas LeBlanc and Ms. Yvette Malcioln. Their presence in Gabay's activities influenced the project partners' actions to back up existing initiatives with policies for the project's sustainability. Gabay is also thankful to other USAID officials for their efforts in their continuing technical assistance for the improvement of project management, advocacy and communication strategies and the RBI's financial management.

Gabay also expresses its gratitude to the USAID team for recognition for its good work in partners' meetings and visits from USAID officials from Washington and the Philippines, Pacific Islands and Mongolia. The appreciation expressed confirmed that Gabay's work is valued and the management & staff are motivated to perform at their best. The opportunity given to the Gabay staff to be involved in the seminar on performance management and reporting system was a realization that Gabay-RBI needs more technical support in its documentation process as it is nearing the end of the project.

Gabay has been so thankful to USAID's commitment to support the plight of the children with sensorial disabilities in their right to education as felt by the stakeholders through the visit of Deputy Assistant Administrator and Acting Senior Coordinator of United States International Basic Education Assistance, Ms. LeAnna Marr and Deputy Mission Director, Ms. Rebekah Eubanks in Sorsogon City; and USAID Washington officials and Education Specialist Mr. Allen Neece in Batangas City.

Gabay efforts were complemented by other USAID personnel namely:

- Mr. Daryl Uy, Financial Analyst who has always been available for inquiries and also took initiatives on matters concerning finance and milestone disbursements.
- Ms. Christina Butler, Writer from the Development Outreach Communications Team with the production of two (2) success stories in Sorsogon featured during the International Day of Disability

USAID conducted its usual implementing partners meetings and provided capacity building webinars namely:

- USAID Storytelling for Impact Workshop (September 8, 2022)
- Storytelling Workshop at USAID Embassy (October 6, 2022)
- USAID Fraud Awareness Seminar (November 8, 2022)

Gabay is highly appreciative of the help of USAID/Philippines to guide the team in keeping on track to its goal as on its Year 4 implementation towards the approval of the project's proposal for extension.

VIII. LESSONS LEARNED

A. CHALLENGES

The month of July 2022 has stirred up the hope that Gabay can renew the robust level of partnership and collaboration with newly appointed officials of the Department of Education in its last year of implementation. But the delay in the appointment and assumption to office of the new Undersecretaries for Curriculum and Instruction and Governance and Field Operations has resulted in the deferment of the Debriefing for Year 3. This Debriefing is perceived by Gabay Management as the opportunity where the new Undersecretaries and other DepEd officials will ascertain how the project inputs, strategies and results have contributed to the achievement of the Department's thrust of providing access to quality education among the blind and deaf learners. As to date, Gabay has learned to cope up with the new DepEd and LGU management to maintain connections with project partners and achieve targets for the year. .

The face-to-face training of Community Health Workers (CHWs) scheduled in priority municipalities in Batangas was hampered by increased cases of COVID-19 and the emission of sulfur dioxide from Taal Volcano. Gabay was not able to engage the CHWs for in person screening of children with sensorial disabilities which could have identified new enrollees among school-age children on time for the opening of classes. Gabay team has discussed actions addressing these challenges with the DepEd Divisions and schools but these have not affected the achievement of the year's targets.

Gabay has positively welcomed the opening of in-person classes based on DepEd Order No. 034 series of 2022 or the School Calendar and Activities for School Year 2022-2023. So, it has prepared monitoring activities for the three project sites, specifically classroom observations so that technical assistance can be provided to teachers of the blind and deaf children on matters of accessible learning environment and learning materials for instruction purposes and accommodation and modification strategies appropriate to these children as espoused during the Gabay training. But the Gabay staff were only able to visit a few schools in the Divisions of Batangas City, Sorsogon City and Sorsogon for a limited number of days since there were National and Regional Memoranda that prohibit disturbance of classes. Gabay has to intensify its technical assistance at the classroom level so that the main beneficiaries, the

blind and deaf children will receive the best support from their teachers in their academic performance especially in the area of Reading.

Gabay has to provide recommendations and options to schools on how to manage the lack of teachers, the training needs, the program modifications and others. There is a continued demand for learning resources to be given to the new enrollees and to the GenEd teachers handling children with sensorial disabilities for the first time.

The operations of the Health/Audiological Test Centers in the project sites have to be supported in dispensing the hearing aids to deaf learners. The para-audiometrists require the assistance of an audiologist to make sure that the hearing aids are fitted appropriately in accordance with level of the hearing loss of the recipient.

The project has prioritized the completion of remaining activities and milestones within the targeted time frame. But there are two activities that have to consider the valuable comments gathered from partners.

(1) The Operations Manual on Inclusive Education Community Resource Center (IECRC) has to be revised to Inclusive Learning Resource Center in accordance to Republic Act No. 11650 (2022) “An Act Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education, Establishing Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs) of Learners with Disabilities in All School Districts, Municipalities and Cities ...” The revision is recommended by partners who attended the Year 3 Annual Debriefing held last Nov. 9, 2022.

The revision or first version of the ILRC was completed despite the on-going process of the development of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of this law. The first version was submitted to the Student Inclusion Division, Bureau of Learning Delivery for comments.

(2) The endline evaluation of Gabay interventions for deaf and blind learners has been postponed to April and May 2023 instead of March 2023. This is prompted by the clamor of teachers that children with sensorial disabilities have only attended four months face-to-face classes that started on November 2022 and have not yet been provided the basic readiness to undergo testing or assessment not to mention the development of the required reading skills for the grade in Braille and Filipino Sign Language.

In the event that the IRR for RA 11650 will not be finalized yet in April 2023, Gabay team has to decide an option in consultation with USAID on how to complete the first activity before the project ends. On the second activity, STS has agreed to submit the first draft of the EGRA endline report in the last week of June 2023 while Gabay team with its Consultants has to finalize the report on the endline for the Braille reading assessment and while the Year 5 – Gabay 18-month extension proposal is still being finalized.

B. INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES UTILIZED

To have continuous improvement in the fourth year of implementation, Gabay gathered valuable insights and feedback from previous years' activities. Utilizing innovative strategies, not part of the overall preplanned milestones, allows Gabay to build upon experiences, learned from challenges, and refined approaches to better meet the needs of the target beneficiaries.

With the start of the face-to-face activities, Gabay identified emerging needs of teachers and children with sensorial disabilities. The strategies below are enhancement of previous activities that Gabay initiated to address these needs:

MDVI Skills Training: Empowering Teachers and Parents for Deafblind and MDVI Children.

Gabay noted that a number of enrollees in the project sites are Deafblind and have Multiple Disabilities with Visual Impairment (MDVI) and teachers clamored how to cope with their needs in their classroom instruction. So, a Skills Training on Deafblindness and Multiple Disabilities with Visual Impairment (MDVI) was conducted on July 5-8, 2022 with the assistance of an specialist on these areas from India, Ms. Namita Jacob. The training targeted both teachers and parents together to develop their capacity of building a support system in accessing available resources as well as utilize a continuous learning plan to be used intentionally by both of them in school and at home. Teachers and parents often face difficulties in understanding children with deafblindness and MDVI due to the complexity of their disabilities. Many of these children require proper medical diagnosis and assessment to design interventions that effectively meet their specific needs.

Unlocking Learning for Remote EGRA Innovation.

The Research Triangle Institute (RTI) International with STS brought the idea of creating a Remote Administration of Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) specifically designed for early learners who are deaf or hard of hearing. RTI offered to engage the services of Gabay in its implementation. After having oriented on its goal and objectives, and the specific terms of reference for this activity, Gabay grabbed this opportunity to build the capacity of the staff to learn new ideas on validation as well as expand its skills on the use of Tangerine: Learn. The project yielded valuable insights among the Gabay staff in developing the user-friendly nature of tablet-based assessment delivery using Tangerine: Learn as well as ensuring the effectiveness of non-FSL-fluent proctors which is the current situation among the hearing teachers of the deaf.

Emboldening Support for CSDs: The Impact of Gabay Classroom Observations to the School Heads and other DepEd Officials.

During Gabay's school visits for mentoring and observation sessions in Batangas, Sorsogon, and Southern Leyte from August 2022 to November 2022, and January 2023 to February 2023, school heads, including Public School District Supervisors (PSDS) and Division SPED Supervisors were given the opportunity to engage in classroom observations. They were given the tools being used by Gabay. The involvement of these instructional supervisors had profound impact not only on their knowledge level but also in supporting teachers and parents of children with sensorial disabilities. By immersing themselves in the classroom environment, they gained firsthand insights into the challenges faced by teachers and parents, enabling them to better understand the needs of these children and the efforts made by their teachers. This experience made them realize their needed support, guidance, and action in promoting inclusive education as a right of CSDs that they need to attend to.

Empowering Families Together: Inclusive PCGs Training with CSDs

Gabay's initiative prioritized the critical involvement of families, especially parents, in the education of children with sensorial disabilities (CSDs). In training sessions held in Batangas City, Sorsogon City, and Southern Leyte on November 14-16, 2022, September 17-19, 2022, and February 14-16, 2023, respectively, Gabay recognized the challenges faced by parents who couldn't attend due to caregiving responsibilities.

To address this, Gabay encouraged parents and primary caregivers (PCGs) to bring their children along, ensuring their inclusion in the training. Separate learning sessions were organized for the children, allowing parents to actively engage in the training. The heartwarming highlight occurred during the closing ceremony when the children performed in front of their parents, fostering confidence and creating memorable moments that showcased the progress made in so short a time during the training. This inclusive scenario empowered both PCGs and their children, reinforcing their belief in their ability to perform without discrimination and with confidence.

Fostering Collaboration Between New and Experienced Teachers in Enhancing Reading Experiences for CSDs.

To promote a collaborative learning environment and facilitate knowledge exchange, Gabay conducted teachers' training sessions on November 19, 2022, January 28-29, 2023, and February 18-19, 2023, focusing on enhancing reading experiences for children with sensorial disabilities in Batangas, Sorsogon, and Southern Leyte. These sessions brought together both experienced teachers who had been involved in the project for one to four years and new teachers who recently started working with children with sensorial disabilities or were expecting incoming enrollees in their classrooms.

While there were separate sessions for new and experienced teachers, particularly on the first day, they were combined in the succeeding plenary sessions during demonstration lessons with para students. This arrangement allowed new teachers to observe the teaching techniques employed by their experienced counterparts and provided an opportunity for them to give their comments and feedback. The testimonies and encouragement shared by experienced teachers were particularly uplifting for the new teachers, inspiring them to embrace their roles in teaching CSDs with dedication and passion. It also instilled a sense of confidence and motivation among new teachers, assuring them that they were not alone in this journey and that they had a strong support system to rely on.

Strengthening Community Engagement: Parents Collaboration with MSWDOs and PDAOs.

In the pursuit of empowering families and communities, Gabay organized a Parents' Training session in Southern Leyte from February 14-16, 2023, with the active involvement of Community Leaders, specifically the Heads of the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Offices (MSWDOs) and Focal Persons of Persons with Disability Affairs Offices (PDAOs). This collaborative approach aimed to create action plans that addressed the challenges faced by parents of children with disabilities. The strategies employed during the training proved to have high impact, providing parents with the opportunity to directly engage with community leaders and learn about the available programs and services that were previously unknown to them. The MSWDOs and PDAOs played a vital role in facilitating these discussions and helping parents develop action plans to tackle common issues, such as transportation challenges and accessing inclusive education. The involvement of MSWDOs was particularly significant to them as they gained understanding of disability-inclusive settings and the importance of providing comprehensive support beyond monetary benefits. The focus shifted from pity to believing in the capabilities of persons with disabilities (PWDs) to access education, excel in their pursuits, and maximize their potential. These discussions paved the way for strengthening advocacy efforts and enhancing services for PWDs as parents and local government officials planned together on needed activities to be implemented in their respective communities. Indeed, the collaboration created a powerful platform for dialogue and collaboration.

In the field of education and child development, research and best practices are constantly evolving. By utilizing innovative strategies, Gabay has demonstrated its commitment to staying up to date with the latest developments and incorporating relevant, practical and evidence-based approaches into its activities.

IX. FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The total amount received by Gabay project from USAID for Year 4 is shown in Table___ and a comparative quarterly expense is presented in Table ___.

Table 41. Amount of Milestones Received from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

Milestone #	Date	Amount
Milestone 25	July 18, 2022	1,387,011.00
Milestone 33	September 5, 2022	2,267,512.00
Milestone 34	September 8, 2022	2,267,512.00
Milestone 35	October 19, 2022	5,258,719.00
Milestone 32	December 1, 2022	5,184,164.00
Milestone 28	December 14, 2022	3,579,717.00
Milestone 27	January 16, 2023	693,506.00
Milestone 14	January 23, 2023	4,984,300.00
Milestone 37	June 01, 2023	1,661,014.00
Milestone 38	June 08, 2023	1,107,342.00
	TOTAL	28,390,797.00

Table 42. Comparative Expenses Per Quarter and the Total Expenses from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

Line Item	13th Quarter	14th Quarter	15th Quarter	16th Quarter	Total
A. Salaries & Wages	1,715,450.34	2,215,300.17	1,958,110.06	2,208,759.82	8,097,620.39
B. Project Activities	1,869,234.63	3,390,645.80	3,570,151.07	4,483,764.32	13,313,795.82
C. Transportation & Travel	209,399.32	507,092.85	1,187,868.36	77,710.23	1,982,070.76
D. Equipment	3,577.00	3,099.00	75,990.00	5,148.50	87,814.50
E. Organizational Development	0.00	525,197.07	1,748.17	317.00	527,262.24
F. Sub-Awardee					
School to School International (STS)	1,852,054.28	1,107,770.18	0.00	1,421,523.04	4,381,347.50
Synergeia	0.00	500,000.00	0.00	0.00	500,000.00
G. Other Direct Costs	539,024.24	315,450.10	301,416.28	351,478.12	1,507,368.74
TOTAL	6,188,739.81	8,564,555.17	7,095,283.94	8,548,701.03	30,397,279.95

The above table shows that the largest amount spent was in the 14th quarter (P8,564,555.17) followed by the 16th quarter (P8,548,701.03), 15th quarter (P7,095,283.94 and the least amount spent was in the 13th quarter (P6,188,739.81).

Local Media

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How USAID helped triple the enrollment of blind and deaf children in school in the Philippines

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Thanks to USAID support, Marinel is now enrolled in school. / Shev Pajo for USAID

Six-year-old Marinel Quides stands at the door of her two-room wooden home in Sorsogon, Philippines. Birds chirp in the trees nearby, and Marinel tilts her head to listen, basking in the warmth of the Philippine sun. As her mother Josephine helps Marinel put on her new backpack and gives her a guide stick, Marinel giggles with joy.

Today, she is going to school.

Clutching her guide stick in one hand and her mother's hand in the other, Marinel steps outside and begins to walk along the narrow path leading from her home to the main road.

It's a world of difference from last year, when Marinel held tightly to her mother with both hands — hesitant about each step and unfamiliar surroundings.



Marinel sits with her mother, Josephine, outside their house in Sorsogon, Philippines. / Shev Payo for USAID

From early in Marinel's life, Josephine knew that her daughter couldn't see, but she couldn't afford to take her to a vision specialist. Josephine's husband sells popsicles for a living, while Josephine stays home to take care of Marinel and her two siblings.

"Sometimes, my husband's income is not enough for our daily needs," said Josephine. "The school is far from our house, and we cannot afford the daily transportation expenses."

But even without an official diagnosis, Josephine knew her daughter experienced the world in a different way.

"She always asked, 'Mom, is it night already?' I told her that it was still morning and asked why, and she replied, 'It's dark, Mom.' I knew I would need to adjust so I could be her eyes, but to be honest, I had no idea how to help her."



A community health worker conducts an eye exam at the health center near Marinel's house. / Shev Payo for USAID

After a free eye and ear screening, a USAID-trained community health worker told Josephine about a nearby school with an inclusive education program and helped Marinel enroll in school for the first time. USAID also provided Marinel with braille learning materials.

"This was the first time I found out that there are available resources that can help blind children like Marinel," said Josephine. "I felt hopeful that someone could help us — someone could help me properly guide her."

In addition to helping screen and refer children with disabilities to schools, USAID has also trained nearly 600 teachers on inclusive education strategies and produced more than 5,000 learning materials, such as braille books, the first-ever Filipino Sign Language dictionary with regional variations, and a Filipino Sign Language curriculum that is being used in schools across the country.



Rubie shows materials from her USAID-supported inclusive education training. / Jeff Danipog, USAID

Marinel's teacher, Rubie Bernardino, said that the training and materials have better equipped her to teach students with disabilities and improved her school's inclusive education program.

"When I started teaching special education after seven years as a general education teacher, I was reading books and browsing YouTube for resources just to meet my student's needs," said Rubie. "Then USAID and Resources for the Blind came into the picture, and I was able to learn Filipino Sign Language, braille, and other inclusive education strategies."



Marinel studies shapes using USAID-developed braille learning materials. / Jeff Danipog, USAID

Under Rubie's patient guidance, Marinel and her classmates are learning to count, identify objects, and compare similarities and differences. They're also learning crucial social and emotional skills to help them succeed.

At school, Rubie warmly greets Marinel and her classmates. Marinel's face breaks into a wide grin as Rubie gently takes her finger and runs it over braille letters while saying them aloud.



Teacher Rubie runs Marinel's finger over braille letters and says them aloud. / Shev Payo for USAID

Josephine has already seen the impact that enrolling in school has had on her daughter. Marinel quickly learned to identify shapes and numbers using USAID-supported pre-braille learning materials. Josephine also attended a USAID-supported training for parents of children with disabilities, where she learned braille so she can help Marinel with her school work.

"Enrolling Marinel in school was a big help because I did not know how to teach her myself," said Josephine. "I am really happy that USAID has been my partner to help me meet Marinel's needs."



Marinel and her mother, Josephine, walk through the school grounds. / Jeff Danborg, USAID

Josephine and Rubie are both happy to see Marinel flourishing in school and hope that other children with disabilities will be able to enroll in school and learn the skills they need to succeed.

“We want these children to become independent,” said Rubie. “We want them to achieve their dreams. That’s my purpose as their teacher.”



Teacher Rubie helps her students use USAID-supported braille learning materials. / Jeff Danborg, USAID

In partnership with Resources for the Blind, USAID trained more than 700 community health workers to screen and identify children with vision and hearing disabilities – including Marinel – and help them enroll in school. USAID also provided eye and ear screening equipment to community health centers.

This partnership has helped triple the enrollment of blind and deaf learners in three provinces in just three years.

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About the Author

Christina Butler is a Development Outreach and Communications Writer at USAID’s Mission in the Philippines.

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NEWS TAGALOG NEWS

USAID Hearing Test Center, binuksan sa Batangas

Published on: January 20, 2023
By Mainerta De Castro

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LUNGSOD NG BATANGAS (PIA)—Isinagawa ng United States Agency for International Development (USAID) ang inagurasyon ng Hearing/Audiological Test Center sa Provincial Health Office sa lungsod na ito noong ika-13 ng Enero.

Pinangunahan ni USAID Mission Director Ryan Washburn kasama si Batangas Governor Hermilando Mandanas at mga kinatawan mula sa Resources for the Blind, Department of Education, Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO), Provincial Health Office (PHO), Provincial Disability Affairs Office (PDAO), mga magulang at kabataang mayroon at walang sensorial disabilities.

Ang naturang Hearing/Audiological Test Center ay bahagi ng P112M Gabay Project na ipinatutupad ng Resources for the Blind, isang non government organizationna nskdsenyo upng magkaroon ng access sa de-kalidad na edukasyon ang mga blind, deaf at deafblind na kabataan.

Ito ay mayroong set ng audiometer at hearing test devices at sa pamamagitan ng mga kagamitang ito ay maaaring magsagawa ng ebalwasyon o assessment upang alamin ang uri ng pagkawala ng pandinig na maaaring mild, moderate, severe at profound. Sa pamamagitan nito maaaring mabigyan ng referral para sa medical at educational interventions ang mga batang nawalan ng pandinig.

Tampok sa naturang aktibidad ang symbolic turnover ng Filipino Sign Language (FSL) Stories na nakalagay sa USB at ipinagkaloob sa mga opisyal ng DepEd Division of Batangas. Ang mga FSL Stories na ito ay nasa video at print formats at binuo para sa kapakinabangan at gamit ng mga batang nawalan ng pandinig kasama ag kanilang mga magulang at guardian.

Ayon kay Washburn, ang pakikipag-ugnayan na ito sa pamahalaang panlalawigan ay dulot ng matagal ng koordinasyon at pagtutulungan sa pagitan ng USAID at lokal na pamahalaan sa Batangas.

Maligod namang tinanggap at ipinahayag ni Governor Mandanas ang kanyang pasasalamat sa USAID sa patuloy na pagbibigay ng mga makabuluhang proyekto sa lalawigan ng Batangas na malaki ang matutulong sa mga mamamayang Batangueno.

Sa panayam kay Ging. Bernadette Ronquillo, isang ina na may anak na may kakulangan sa pandinig ay malaki ang matutulong sa katulad nila dahil malapit na ito at hindi na nila kailangang lumuwas papuntang Maynila upang malpakonsulta ang kanyang anak kung mayroon progreso ang kanyang kondisyon. (MDC/PIA-Batangas)

Philippine Information Agency

The Philippine Information Agency is the official public information arm of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. The PIA works with the Office of the President, national government agencies, and other public sector entities in communicating their programs, projects, and services to the Filipino people. The agency has a regional office in all 16 regions and has an information center in 78 provinces across the Philippines.

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NEWS

USAID, LGU Maasin City open hearing, audio test center

Published on: February 16, 2023
By Marcelo Pedalino

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MAASIN CITY (PIA) — A top official of a US-based non-government organization joined with city and provincial leaders, as well as Department of Education (DepEd) heads, to inaugurate a facility Wednesday, February 15, that offers hope for children with special needs to get attention for their medical, learning needs.

Yvette Malcain, deputy director of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Education, and City Mayor Nacional Mercado cut the ribbon and pulled open a marker for the hearing and audiological test center located inside the health center in barangay Combado, this city.

The inauguration ceremony was also attended by Provincial Board Member Yna Marie Loy representing Vice Governor Rosa Emilia Mercado, DepEd Regional Director Evelyn Fetalvero, Josilyn Solana and Genia Muralto, schools division superintendent in the city and province, respectively.

"All children have a right to education," Malcain pointed out in her congratulatory message, adding that the center can be an instrument for blind, deaf, and deaf-blind children to increase participation and learning, and strengthen inclusive, quality education which the USAID was committed to pursue.

The facilities are part of P112 million four-year project called Gabay and implemented by the Resources for the Blind Inc., an NGO, Malcain shared.

Mayor Mercado for his part said he was grateful to the American people for extending such kind of help so that children with sense disabilities on hearing and eyesight can gain equality in terms of education, giving them hope.

Board Member Loy likewise expressed support and commitment on the part of the provincial government for the project, saying she believed in shaping young minds, obviously without discrimination.

Gabay project, according to a press statement earlier sent to PIA, reaches out to children with vision and hearing problems by providing the necessary services for their inclusion in their own families, schools, and communities.

Children who are not yet in school and found with hearing impairments at the newly-opened Hearing/Audiological Test Center are referred to DepEd for enrollment.

"Since 2019, the Gabay project has been implemented in the provinces of Batangas, Sorsogon, and Southern Leyte and has helped triple the enrollment of deaf and blind children," the press statement reported. (MMP/PIA Southern Leyte)

Philippine Information Agency

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FEATURED



Potential LPA may intensify 'habagat,' bring rains over parts of PH

NATIONAL NEWS

US inaugurates hearing test center in Batangas

BY JOSEPH PEDRAJAS
Jan 25, 2023 11:39 PM



The US has inaugurated a hearing test facility in Batangas province as part of its multi-million program to help children with vision and hearing disabilities.

Ryan Washburn, director of US Agency for International Development (USAID), and Batangas Gov. Hermilando Mandanas led on Jan. 13 the opening ceremony of the center, which houses an audiometer and hearing test devices donated by the US government.



Photo courtesy of US Embassy in Manila
Washburn also visited the nearby Inclusive Education Community Resource Center (IECRC) in Batangas City East Elementary School, where he turned over Filipino Sign Language storybooks to Department of Education (DepEd) officials.

IECRC houses US-donated braille embossers and other assistive devices used by teachers to produce learning materials for young students with visual and hearing impairments.

According to the US Embassy in Manila, the two facilities are part of USAID's four-year, P112 million (\$2.05 million) Gabay project.

The initiative aims to increase the access of blind, deaf, and deafblind children to quality education.

"USAID is deeply committed to the inclusion of people who have vision and hearing disabilities and those who advocate and offer services on behalf of people with disabilities," Washburn said.

"This commitment extends from the design to the implementation of our programs that advocate for people with disabilities," he added.

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Batangas opens Hearing and Audiological Test Center



Photo courtesy of facebook.com/batspio

□ January 18, 2023

The Batangas provincial government has opened a new Hearing and Audiological Test Center at the Provincial Health Office.

It is the first facility of its kind in the province and is part of the Gabay Project of the United States Agency for International Development, which seeks to increase access to quality education for children with sensory disabilities.

The project is being implemented by Resources for the Blind, Inc., a local non-government organization.

Batangas Gov. Dodo Mandanas and Ryan Washburn of USAID led the inauguration of the facility.

The new Hearing and Audiological Test Center has an audiometer and other hearing test devices for hearing evaluations to determine the type of hearing loss.

This would allow necessary services like medical and educational interventions to be given to the concerned individuals.

The Batangas provincial government also held the symbolic turnover of the Filipino Sign Language stories to the Department of Education – Division of Batangas Province.

Social Media Posts from Partners



Batangas PIO
January 13

STRENGTHENING INCLUSIVITY: Batangas Governor DoDo Mandanas, together with United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission Director, Mr. Ryan Washburn, led the inauguration of the newly-completed Hearing and Audiological Test Center today, January 13, 2023, at the Provincial Health Office, Batangas City.

The facility, the first in the province, is part of USAID's four-year Gabay Project, which is being implemented by Resources for the Blind, Inc., a local non-government organization. Gabay Project started in Batangas last 2019 with an aim to increase access to quality education for children with sensory disabilities.

In partnership of the Provincial Government of Batangas, and through the Gabay Project, essential equipment such as an audiometer and other hearing test devices were set up at the hearing test center, and will be used to conduct hearing evaluations to be able to determine the type of hearing loss. Through this, necessary services like medical and educational interventions will be properly given.

Aside from the inauguration, the symbolic turnover of the Filipino Sign Language (FSL) stories to the Department of Education (DepEd) – Division of Batangas Province was also held.

Also in attendance at the inauguration ceremony were Vice Governor Mark Leviste, Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Rosvilinda Ozaeta, and Provincial Social Welfare and Development Officer Jocelyn Montalbo, along with other officials from USAID, Resources for the Blind, DepEd, and Provincial Government of Batangas.

👤 Karl Ambida
👤 Jonathan Macaraig

#HelpinMotion
#BatangasMagiging
#HindiKawMaliban



Valenzuela City
June 14 at 7:00 PM

Representatives from Synergia Foundation, Resources for the Blind, Inc. (RBI) Gabay Program, and municipalities of the Province of Batangas, Province of Sorsogon, and Province of Southern Leyte visited Valenzuela City for a study tour today, June 14, 2023.

The delegates toured around the Valenzuela Special Education Center (ValSPED) to observe the school's best practices. Afterwards, they had a panel discussion with Vice Mayor Lorie Natividad-Borja, 2nd District Councilor Nina Lopez, Education 360 Degrees Action Officer and former Councilor Rovin Feliciano, and ValSPED Administrator Dr. Teresita Pangan to further discuss best practices at the Valenzuela City Hall.





I'm glad to see her leading her classmates, encouraging them to go and study.

USAID Philippines
December 3, 2022

On International Day of People with Disabilities, find out how USAID is supporting [#InclusiveEducation](#) by training teachers and engaging health workers so children like Janella can go to school and learn the skills they need to succeed. Watch her inspiring story! [#IDPD](#)

XI. UPCOMING MAJOR ACTIVITIES / PLAN FOR YEAR 5

Table 43. Quarter 17 - Year 5 Planned and Upcoming Activities (July – September 2023)

Planned Activities	Venue	Target Date	In-Charge
Preliminary Activities			
1. Courtesy Visits and Orientation re Gabay Year 5 Extension	DepEd Central Office Regional Office (IV-A, V, VIII) Division Office (Laguna, Albay & Leyte) District Office (Los Baños Central School, Pio Duran East Central School, Tanauan 1 Central School) LGU (Municipalities of Los Baños, Pio Duran, Tanauan)	June 2023 July 2023	YSQuijano Ms. AMojica Ms. JMagsubar Ms. SPayo Ms. GBombay Field Coordinators Ms. GBalaguer Ms. JdelaCruz Ms. MOxina
2. Harmonization of DepEd-Gabay Inclusive Education Communication Resource Center (IECRC) Operations Manual with RA 11650	Gabay Office	July 2023	
3. Year 5 Annual Work Plan	Gabay Office	July 2023	
4. Year 4 Annual debriefing & evaluation of project implementation	Hotel in Manila	July - August 2023	
5. Consultation workshop for the implementation of Modular ILRC in the Pilot Schools			

Planned Activities	Venue	Target Date	In-Charge
Intermediate Result 1			
1. Capability Building of LGU Health Officers on the Implementation of ILRC and PEEC Training of CHWs	Municipality of Los Banos, Laguna Municipality of Pio Duran, Albay Municipality of Tanauan, Leyte	September 2023	Ms. AMojica Ms. JMagsubar Ms. SPayo Ms. Bombay Ms. LAnile Ms. MGabriel Ms. KLabastida Mr. JBarcenas Ms. FPublico Ms. RAmasan Ms. GBalaguer Ms. JdelaCruz
Intermediate Result 2			
1. Capability building of DepEd and school officials on the implementation of the ILRCs in pilot schools	Division of Laguna Division of Albay Division of Leyte	September 2023	YSQuijano Ms. AMojica Ms. JMagsubar Ms. SPayo Ms. GBombay Field Coordinators Ms. GBalaguer Ms. JdelaCruz Ms. MOxina
2. Mentoring of SNEd & GenEd teachers and parents by Blind/Deaf Professionals	- Pilot Schools in the Division of Batangas City & Batangas, Sorsogon City & Sorsogon, Maasin City & Southern Leyte - Los Baños CS & selected schools - Pio Duran East CS & selected schools - Tanauan 1 & selected schools	September 2023	Ms. JMagsubar Ms. MGabriel Mr. JBarcenas Blind and Deaf Mentors Field Coordinators
3. Monitoring visits and technical assistance to existing and additional project sites		September 2023	YSQuijano Ms. AMojica Ms. JMagsubar Ms. SPayo Ms. GBombay Field Coordinators

Planned Activities	Venue	Target Date	In-Charge
4. Research on Teachers and Parents Competencies on Educating Children with Sensorial Disabilities		September 2023	YSQuijano Ms. AMojica Ms. JMagsubar Ms. SPayo Bicol University Gubat Campus
Intermediate Result 3			
1. Capability Building of LGU Health Officers on the Implementation of ILRC and PEEC Training of CHWs	Municipality of Los Banos, Laguna Municipality of Pio Duran, Albay Municipality of Tanauan, Leyte	September 2023	YSQuijano Ms. AMojica Ms. JMagsubar Ms. SPayo Ms. GBombay Field Coordinators Ms. GBalaguer Ms. JdelaCruz

XII. ANNEXES

A. Hearing/Audiological Test Center (H/ATC) Operational Guidelines

B. Revised Inclusive Learning Resource Center (ILRC) Operations Manual

C. Multiple Disabilities with Visual Impairment (MDVI) Case Study Report by Perkins International

D. FSL Curriculum 2nd Feedback Report

E. Braille Reading Assessment Result

F. Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) Endline Evaluation Result

G. Monitoring of Schools Report

H. Local School Board (LSB) Report by Synergeia Foundation Inc.

I. Gabay Featured Stories