

# POLICY BRIEF

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## IMPACT OF ACCESSIBILITY TO SCHOOLS AND ECONOMIC CENTERS ON POVERTY AND GENDER EQUITY IN THE PHILIPPINES

### INTRODUCTION

**Accessibility as defined in Fillone, et.al. (2009) means the ease with which the individual could avail of the social services and economic opportunities laid in geographic space. In measuring accessibility, this study used as gauge the cost of travel instead of travel time. In order to relate accessibility to schools and economic centers with poverty variables and gender equity concerns, this study used descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and regression modelling.**

The result of the study shows that:

- (1) There is no significant relationship between accessibility to the nearest elementary school and the proportion of children aged 6-12 years old (regardless of gender) who are not in elementary school. However, there is a significant relationship between accessibility to the nearest high school and the proportion of males and females aged 13-16 years old who are not in high school. The findings suggest that at the Barangay level, accessibility to the nearest high school affects the proportion of male and female aged 13-16 years old who are not studying.
- (2) The availability of a good road (i.e. a national road) passing through the barangay has no effect on unemployment, but there is less poverty experienced (regardless of gender) when a good road is present in the barangay.
- (3) The mean proportion in both genders at the barangay level among those who are not in school increases as the expected school-age population move up from elementary to high school, with more males than females dropping out of school.
- (4) In totality, there are more males than females who are unemployed; however, at the barangay level, the proportion of males who are unemployed is consistently lower than that of the females
- (5) The poverty variable gender experience on food shortage is not a good indicator of poverty compared to the other poverty variables. This may mean that regardless of gender, experiencing poverty does not necessarily mean that there is food shortage.

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## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the study findings, it is recommended that local infrastructures in support of social services (i.e. schools) and economic centers (i.e. provision of good roads), especially at the barangay level, be properly planned to address poverty and its effect on gender equity.

The government policy of putting up elementary schools in every barangay has had a very significant impact on addressing the accessibility concerns of children going to these elementary schools; in fact, the study showed that it is no longer a significant concern among the respondents. However, in the case of males and females aged 13 to 16 years old who are not students at the nearest high school, the accessibility problem is still a persistent concern. Since not all barangays could be provided with high schools because of the high costs of building and maintenance and [with regards to already existing accessible high schools] the prevailing quota on school populations, the optimal location of high schools should be studied carefully with regards to its catchment area (i.e. which barangays have high number of children of high school age). This is especially relevant in cases where new high school buildings have yet to be decided, as well as its relative location to other high schools in the vicinity of the city or province.

In the case of economic impact, the study findings show, on the one hand, that the presence of a road traversing a barangay does not automatically result in more employment or self-employment. On the other hand, the presence of a functional road that facilitates the movement of people, goods, and services in the study area does mitigate poverty. In practical terms, this means that a self-employed farmer or fisherman – regardless of gender - has a higher chance of being less poor if he has easy access to market and information, that is, if these are available within his barangay.

Four variables (or measures) on poverty were used in the study, namely:

- (1) Barangay-level Social Composite Index (SCI)
- (2) Households with income below the poverty threshold
- (3) Households with income below the food threshold, and
- (4) Households experiencing food shortage.

Among these variables, the experience of the household in food shortage is least indicative of poverty. This suggests that in measuring poverty at the barangay level, the incidence of food shortage among households should not be used. Field data reveal that even if a household is poor, the members may not necessarily suffer from food shortage. This is especially true in the provinces.

In measuring poverty vis-à-vis gender and socio-economic characteristics, caution should be applied on the proper use of statistical data and the corresponding units. The study demonstrates that in the 10 study areas, there are more males than females of corresponding school-age in both elementary and high school levels. In the same 10 study areas, there are barangays where mean proportion of females who are not in elementary school is higher than that of the males. Meanwhile, mean proportion of males who are not in high school is higher than that of the females. Also, the total number of school-age population at the barangay level who are not in school, regardless of gender, increases as the expected school-age population move up from elementary to high school. Meanwhile, there were more males than females who are unemployed. However, in all the provinces and cities studied, mean proportion of unemployment at the barangay level reveals that the number of males who are unemployed is

consistently lower than that of the females. This is understandable since in the first place there are fewer females of employment age resulting to a higher proportion of unemployment in the males. a higher proportion of unemployment in the males.

Aggregated data of CBMS at the barangay level show that, regardless of gender, accessibility concerns, especially when going to a high school and to the economic centers greatly affect the poverty situation. In order to improve the relationships between these variables, more data segregation on accessibility can be obtained by conducting a sampling of daily transport modes by household members, as well as the corresponding service they employ to go to school or to economic centers. The CBMS questionnaire survey forms can be modified to include questions related to other accessibility concerns.

Since not all provinces and cities were visited, the definition of the major economic centers in some cases was based on the following attributes as seen from online maps:

- (1) population
- (2) intensity of development, and
- (3) presence of major port or airport infrastructure

There may be a need to provide a more refined definition of a major economic center in a province or a city.



## REFERENCES

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