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Overview

Improve the quality of education through learning assessment

Philippines SEA-PLM 2019

What is SEA-PLM?

The Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) is a large-scale regional learning assessment program to assess learning outcomes of Grade 5 students in Southeast Asia. It was initiated by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Secretariat and UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF EAPRO) in 2012 as the first regional learning assessment program, designed by and for countries in Southeast Asia, to strengthen the capacity to measure learning outcomes, use data, and promote knowledge exchange on policies and practices in the region.[1]

The first round of assessment was launched in 2019, which measures learning outcomes of Grade 5 students in reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as attitudes, values, and engagement in global citizenship. The Philippines participated in SEA-PLM 2019 together with five other countries in Southeast Asia: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Viet Nam.[2]

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1. UNICEF & SEAMEO. (2020). *SEA-PLM 2019 Main Regional Report, Children's learning in 6 Southeast Asian countries.* Bangkok, Thailand: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) & Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) – SEA-PLM Secretariat.
2. For more information, consult the official regional website www.seaplm.org

Methodology

Sample

SEA-PLM 2019 main survey data were collected during the 2018–2019 school year with a sample of children that is representative of the entire school population enrolled in Grade 5 in each country. In the Philippines, 6,083 Grade 5 students took SEA-PLM 2019 assessments in reading, writing, mathematics, and global citizenship through a paper-pencil test and questionnaire in February 2019. In the same timeframe, 5,780 parents, 1,153 Grade 5 teachers, and 173 school principals answered background questionnaires.

Sample regions, divisions, and schools were selected via multistage stratified random sampling. Some exclusions were made due to peace and order issues, remote location, or different curricula being used (e.g., BARMM, international schools).

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Assessment in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics

SEA-PLM 2019 measures learning outcomes in the domains of reading, writing, and mathematics. The assessment tests were administered in English, which is the language of instruction in Grade 5 in the Philippines.[3] Children's reading, writing, and mathematics test scores can also be gauged against proficiency scales. Each proficiency scale is divided into bands describing different levels of student proficiency. Children who are in Band 6 or above are likely to have mastered the fundamental reading and mathematical skills expected by the end of primary school **(Box 1)**.[4]

Box 1: SEA-PLM and Sustainable Development Goal 4	Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 calls for access to quality basic education for all children, equipping them with basic literacy and numeracy. SEA-PLM 2019 is aligned with SDG Indicator 4.1.1 to measure the proportion of students achieving the minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics at the end of lower primary education (4.1.1a)[5] and at the end of primary education (4.1.1b). Based on this definition, 10% of students in the Philippines met the minimum reading standard and 17% for the minimum mathematical standard expected for the end of primary education, as defined in the SDG 4. SEA-PLM 2019 also supports the evidence generation and monitoring of global citizenship under SDG 4.7.

Background Questionnaires

In addition to assessment in reading, writing, and mathematics, SEA-PLM 2019 administered background questionnaires for students, parents, teachers, and school principals to collect information about the learning context. Data collected through background questionnaires were used to understand factors associated with the performance of students in reading, writing, and mathematics. Questions relating to global citizenship were also administered via background questionnaires for students and teachers. It is the first international large-scale assessment to measure attitudes, values, and, behaviors on global citizenship at primary education level.[6] The background questionnaires were also administered in English.[7]

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3. UNICEF & DepEd. (2021). *SEA-PLM 2019 National Report of the Philippines*. Manila, The Philippines: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) & Department of Education (DepEd).
4. For more information about the approach and content of assessment in reading, writing, and mathematics, consult UNICEF & SEAMEO. (2019). *SEA-PLM 2019 Assessment Framework* (1st ed.). Bangkok, Thailand: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) & Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) – SEA-PLM Secretariat.
5. For the Philippines, "end of lower primary" is Grade 4, whereas "end of primary" is Grade 6.
6. For more information about the global citizenship framework, consult UNICEF & SEAMEO. (2017). *SEA-PLM 2019 Global Citizenship Assessment Framework* (1st ed.). Bangkok, Thailand: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) & Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) – SEA-PLM Secretariat.
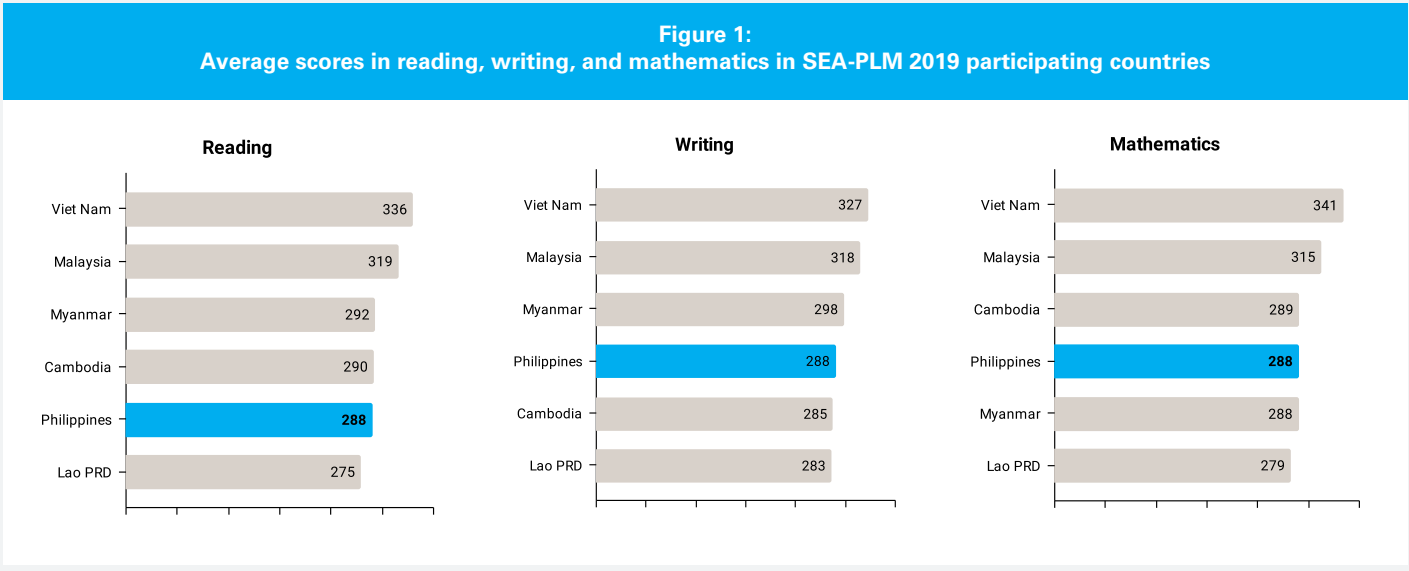7. For more information, consult Chapter 1 of UNICEF & SEAMEO. (2020). *SEA-PLM 2019 Main Regional Report, Children's learning in 6 Southeast Asian countries*. Bangkok, Thailand: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) & Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) – SEA-PLM Secretariat.

Results

According to the *SEA-PLM 2019 National Report of the Philippines*,[8] the average score of Grade 5 students in **reading** assessment was 288 points in the Philippines **(Figure 1)**, implying that a typical Filipino Grade 5 student can read a range of everyday texts fluently and begin to engage their meaning. However, only 10% of Filipino Grade 5 students achieved the minimum proficiency level in reading as expected by the end of primary education according to the SDG 4 definition. These students can understand texts with familiar structures and manage competing information. The regional average among the six SEA-PLM participating countries was 29%, while a larger share of students achieved this level in Viet Nam (82%) and Malaysia (58%).

Similarly, the average score of Grade 5 students in **writing** assessment was 288 points in the Philippines, suggesting that a typical Filipino Grade 5 student can produce very limited writing with fragmented ideas and inadequate vocabulary. Forty-six percent of Filipino Grade 5 students belonged to the lowest proficiency band in writing. They have limited ability to present ideas in writing and can produce a few sentences with very limited content.

Likewise, the average score of Grade 5 students in **mathematics** assessment was 288 points in the Philippines. Filipino Grade 5 students can generally apply number properties and units of measurement. Against the SDG 4 definition, 17% of Filipino Grade 5 students achieved the minimum proficiency level in mathematics as expected by the end of primary education. These students can at least perform mathematical operations, including fractions, and interpret tables and graphs. The regional average among the six SEA-PLM participating countries was 35%, while a large proportion of students in Viet Nam (92%) and Malaysia (64%) were able to meet this mathematics proficiency level.

Figure 1:
Average scores in reading, writing, and mathematics in SEA-PLM 2019 participating countries

Reading

Country	Score
Viet Nam	336
Malaysia	319
Myanmar	292
Cambodia	290
Philippines	**288**
Lao PRD	275

Writing

Country	Score
Viet Nam	327
Malaysia	318
Myanmar	298
Philippines	288
Cambodia	285
Lao PRD	283

Mathematics

Country	Score
Viet Nam	341
Malaysia	315
Cambodia	289
Philippines	**288**
Myanmar	288
Lao PRD	279

Source: Adapted from SEA-PLM 2019 National Report of the Philippines[9]

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8. UNICEF & DepEd. (2021). *SEA-PLM 2019 National Report of the Philippines*. Manila, The Philippines: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) & Department of Education (DepEd).
9. UNICEF & DepEd. (2021). *SEA-PLM 2019 National Report of the Philippines*. Manila, The Philippines: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) & Department of Education (DepEd).

How to Use SEA-PLM

SEA-PLM provides comparable and reliable data on learning outcomes of Grade 5 students in Southeast Asia. Results of SEA-PLM may be utilized in the following three domains to improve the quality of learning in basic education.

To generate data and evidence on the success factors and barriers to children's academic performance

SEA-PLM results help countries understand children's Grade 5 learning outcomes. This includes the identification of demographic and contextual factors that are associated with academic performance as well as inequities in learning that are driving the learning crisis. The *SEA-PLM 2019 National Report of the Philippines* and *Philippines SEA-PLM 2019 Supplementary Report: An Analysis of Contextual Variables,* written jointly by the Department of Education (DepEd) and UNICEF Philippines, provide evidence on learning outcomes and contextual factors that are linked to learning performance for the Philippines. Furthermore, SEA-PLM can track children's achievement over time through subsequent cycles of assessments. As such, the next cycle of SEA-PLM may enable participating countries to measure children's learning performance before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, while SEA-PLM 2019 serves as the baseline.

To promote regional knowledge exchange on learning and education policies in Southeast Asia

SEA-PLM, as a regional learning assessment program, provides comparable data on learning outcomes among Southeast Asian countries. This intends to help the countries learn from each other on learning environments, children's experiences, school practices, and education policies that may contribute to better learning performance. In addition to analytical reports, virtual policy roundtable discussions organized by the SEA-PLM Secretariat have been promoting the exchange of country experiences on topics such as learning trends of girls and boys, low-performing readers, and teacher workforce.

To inform the designing and implementation of appropriate and equitable education policies and practices

Analysis of SEA-PLM results and regional knowledge exchange may help countries identify, prioritize, and address educational challenges in key policy areas such as curriculum development, resource allocation, pedagogical practice, and planning at national and sub-national levels. The *Philippines SEA-PLM 2019 Policy Brief Series* provides in-depth analysis and policy recommendations on early childhood education, parental engagement, and teachers for the Philippines. More research and data analysis that can promote evidence-based decision and policy making towards inclusive quality learning for all children are encouraged.