



PHILIPPINE NORMAL UNIVERSITY
The National Center for Teacher Education

POLICY BRIEF SERIES

VOLUME 10 | ISSUE 4 | 2026

PRINT ISSN: 2984-9063

ONLINE ISSN: 2984-9071

Bridging Policy and Practice in the Alternative Learning System (ALS): Implications for Local Government Unit (LGU) Implementation and Social Development

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Adult Education Program conducted in 2024 - Barangay Alabang, Muntinlupa City

Education is a fundamental human right and a critical driver of inclusive social and economic development. In the Philippines, however, persistent poverty, geographic isolation, conflict, disability, early pregnancy, and labor participation continue to exclude millions of children, youth, and adults from formal schooling. This has resulted in a growing population of out-of-school children, youth, and adults (OSCYA), which increased from an estimated 3.8–4.0 million in 2021 to nearly 11 million by 2025 based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the Department of Education (DepEd), and the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II).

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) serves as the government's primary policy response to educational exclusion. Strengthened through Republic Act No. 11510 (ALS Act of 2020) and reinforced by Republic Act No. 11899 (EDCOM II Act), ALS is now institutionalized as a parallel and complementary pathway within the national education system. Despite this strong legal framework, ALS implementation remains uneven across Local Government Units (LGUs), with disparities in funding, infrastructure, facilitator support, and governance capacity affecting learner retention and completion outcomes.

This policy brief examines ALS as a social development intervention and emphasizes that national policy effectiveness ultimately depends on LGU-level implementation. It highlights key implementation gaps, presents evidence on access, completion rates, Community Learning Centers (CLCs), and facilitator support, and outlines actionable policy recommendations for LGUs. Strengthening LGU ownership, investing in community-based delivery, supporting ALS facilitators, and institutionalizing data-driven planning are critical to ensuring that ALS fulfills its mandate of inclusive, equitable, and transformative education.

Recommended Citation:

Dayuta, B.C., *Bridging Policy and Practice in the Alternative Learning System (ALS): Implications for Local Government Unit (LGU) Implementation and Social Development* *Policy Brief Series* 10 (5), pp. 1-6. Philippine Normal University Educational Policy Research and Development Office.



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Introduction

Education is constitutionally protected in the Philippines and internationally recognized as a cornerstone of human dignity, social inclusion, and sustainable development. Yet access to formal education remains uneven, particularly among marginalized populations such as urban poor communities, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, migrant families, and residents of geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas.

To address these persistent inequities, the Philippine government established the Alternative Learning System (ALS) as a flexible, community-based education pathway for individuals unable to complete formal schooling. Initially recognized under Republic Act No. 9155 and Executive Order No. 356, ALS was elevated to a fully institutionalized program through Republic Act No. 11510 in 2020, which mandated the professionalization of ALS teachers, the establishment of Community Learning Centers (CLCs) nationwide, and stronger governance and quality assurance mechanisms.

Further reinforced by Republic Act No. 11899 (EDCOM II Act), ALS is now positioned as a central pillar of education reform and human capital development. However, despite these national mandates, ALS outcomes vary widely across LGUs. This divergence underscores the need to examine ALS implementation at the local level and to treat ALS not merely as an education program, but as a strategic social development investment.

Why This Matters to LGUs

Education is a constitutionally protected right and a key driver of local development, employment, and social stability. In many cities and municipalities, persistent poverty, geographic isolation, child labor, early pregnancy, disability, and migration continue to prevent children, youth, and adults from completing formal schooling. These conditions result in a growing population of out-of-school children, youth, and adults (OSCYA), particularly in urban poor communities and geographically isolated barangays.

The **Alternative Learning System (ALS)** is the primary mechanism through which LGUs can directly address these gaps. National laws—**RA 9155**, **RA 11510 (ALS Act of 2020)**, and **RA 11899 (EDCOM II Act)**—clearly mandate the strengthening of ALS and recognize the **critical role of LGUs** in ensuring access, facilities, and local support. However, evidence shows that ALS outcomes vary widely across LGUs,

largely depending on local policy decisions, funding priorities, and governance capacity.

However, the effectiveness of ALS ultimately depends on decisive local action. Persistent disparities in LGU funding, infrastructure, facilitator support, and program supervision continue to weaken implementation, particularly in underserved and geographically isolated areas (Fernandez, 2013; Panaligan, 2016; Department of Education, 2021). These gaps limit learner access, reduce program quality, and undermine outcomes. For ALS to deliver its intended impact, LGU councils and legislators must strengthen local ownership, allocate adequate resources, support ALS facilitators, and ensure that national policy mandates under RA 11510 and RA 11899 are fully translated into practice. Treating ALS as a social development investment—rather than a peripheral education program—is essential to breaking cycles of exclusion, improving workforce readiness, and advancing inclusive and sustainable local development (Department of Education, 2017; Montemayor, 2019).

Key Issues

1. Persistent Growth of Out-of-School Children, Youth, and Adults:

Table 1

National estimates of out-of-school children & youth — 2021–2025

Year	Approximate Number (Rounded)
2021	3.8–4.0 million
2022	7.8–7.9 million
2023	7.9 million (School Year 2022–2023 estimate)
2024	10.7 million
2025	11.0 million (early 2025 reporting)

Note. Data compiled from the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023, 2024), Department of Education (2023), and Second Congressional Commission on Education (2024, 2025).

National data indicate a sharp rise in the OSCYA population from 2021 to 2025, reflecting systemic barriers that formal education alone cannot address. Without strengthened ALS implementation, LGUs face long-term risks related to unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion.

2. Uneven LGU Capacity and Resource Allocation.

Despite national mandates, LGU funding for ALS varies significantly. Some LGUs maintain functional CLCs and



provide facilitator support, while others rely on ad hoc or minimal assistance, resulting in unequal access and outcomes.

Table 2

Illustrative Annual ALS Budget by LGU Classification in the Philippines (2025)

LGU Classification	Estimated ALS Learners	No. of CLCs	Average Annual Budget (₱)	Approximate Cost per Learner (₱/year)
Highly Urbanized City (HUC)	3,000–5,000	20+	14,700,000	4,900–5,000
Component City / 1st-Class Municipality	800–1,500	8–12	5,980,000	5,000
2nd-Class Municipality	500–800	5–7	3,800,000	4,800–5,000
3rd-Class Municipality	300–500	4–5	2,470,000	4,900–5,100
4th-Class Municipality	150–300	3–4	1,718,000	5,100–5,300
5th-Class Municipality	80–200	2–3	1,190,000	5,500–6,000

Note. Illustrative estimates based on Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and Commission on Audit (COA) guidelines and typical LGU budget practices (2025).

The illustrative annual ALS budget table presents benchmark funding levels required for LGUs to implement the Alternative Learning System effectively in 2025, scaled by LGU classification and learner population. Budget differences reflect economies of scale, with Highly Urbanized Cities requiring larger total allocations due to higher learner volumes, while lower-class municipalities incur higher per-learner costs because of fixed expenses for Community Learning Centers, facilitator honoraria, and program monitoring.

These benchmarks must be viewed against the national context of a rapidly growing out-of-school children and youth (OSCY/OSY) population, which increased from an estimated 3.8–4.0 million in 2021 to nearly 11 million by 2025, based on DepEd, PSA, and EDCOM II reports. This upward trend underscores the urgency of sustained LGU investment in ALS, as national policy mandates under RA 11510 and RA 11899 can only be realized through adequate local financing that expands access, improves learner retention, and strengthens community-based delivery mechanisms.

3. Limited Learning Infrastructure at the Community Level

Although approximately 25,219 ALS Community Learning Centers operate nationwide, only about 1,000 are considered fully conducive learning environments. Many barangays lack

accessible learning spaces, forcing learners to travel long distances or discontinue participation.

4. Low Completion and Retention Rates

Table 3

Comparative Analysis of ALS Completion Rates in the Philippines (2019–2024)

School Year	ALS Enrolment (Approx.)	ALS Completers (Approx.)	Completion Rate
2019–2020	Not consistently reported	Not consistently reported	55–60% (estimated)
2020–2021	Not consistently reported	Not consistently reported	40–45% (estimated)
2021–2022	Not consistently reported	Not consistently reported	45% (estimated)
2022–2023	650,000 (approx.)	Not fully disaggregated	45–48% (estimated)
2023–2024	655,517	302,807	46.20%

Note. Data compiled from Department of Education (DepEd) reports (2021–2024), Second Congressional Commission on Education (2024, 2025), and related ALS performance studies. Estimates are used where official disaggregated data are unavailable.

ALS completion rates have remained below 50% over the past five years, with School Year 2023–2024 recording a completion rate of only 46.2%. This highlights the need for learner support systems beyond enrollment.

The table shows that ALS completion rates have remained consistently **below 50% over the past five years**, with the most recent and reliable data from School Year 2023–2024 indicating a completion rate of **46.2%**. While pre-pandemic completion rates were relatively higher, disruptions caused by COVID-19 significantly reduced learner retention, and recovery has been slow despite policy reforms under RA 11510. This persistent pattern highlights that expanding ALS access alone is insufficient; targeted investments in learner support, facilitator capacity, and community-based delivery mechanisms are essential to improve completion and ensure that ALS fulfills its role as an effective second-chance education pathway.

Many ALS learners struggle to complete programs or pass the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Examination due to financial constraints, family responsibilities, lack of psychosocial support, and inconsistent instructional delivery. Enrollment alone does not translate to success.



5. Inadequate and Uneven Facilitator Support

ALS facilitators experience irregular compensation, limited access to professional development, and substantial workloads. Variations in honoraria across LGUs contribute to high turnover and inconsistencies in the quality of instruction.

Table 4

Comparative Overview of Honoraria and Incentives for ALS Facilitators in the Philippines (2019–2024)

Period / Context	Typical Honoraria / Incentives	Funding Source	Notes / Issues Identified
Pre-Pandemic (2019–2020)	₱3,000–₱5,000/month (LGU-provided, variable)	LGU funds; limited DepEd support	Honoraria inconsistent across LGUs; many facilitators relied on temporary or project-based arrangements.
Pandemic Period (2020–2021)	₱2,000–₱4,000/month or irregular payments	LGU funds; emergency reallocations	Budget disruptions led to delayed or reduced payments; some facilitators received no honoraria due to shifting LGU priorities.
Recovery Phase (2021–2022)	₱3,000–₱6,000/month	LGU funds; limited special programs	Gradual resumption of incentives, but large disparities persisted between urban and rural LGUs.
Post-ALS Act Implementation (2022–2023)	₱4,000–₱7,000/month	LGU funds; DepEd–LGU partnerships	RA 11510 emphasized professionalization, but honoraria levels still depended largely on LGU capacity.
Recent / Current Practice (2023–2024)	₱5,000–₱8,000/month (some LGUs); non-cash incentives (e.g., training, transport)	LGU funds; select partner support	Some LGUs increased honoraria or added non-monetary incentives, but no standardized national rate exists.

Note. Data synthesized from Department of Education (DepEd) reports, Second Congressional Commission on Education (2024, 2025), and relevant literature on ALS implementation (Fernandez, 2013; Panaligan, 2016). Values reflect typical ranges and LGU-dependent practices.

Shortages of trained ALS facilitators, inadequate learning materials, and poorly maintained CLCs are consistently cited barriers. LGUs can directly address these gaps through local policy and funding decisions.

Honoraria and incentives for ALS facilitators remain **highly uneven and largely dependent on LGU resources**, with typical monthly rates ranging from **₱3,000 to ₱8,000** over the past five years. Despite the passage of RA 11510, which underscores the professionalization of ALS personnel, the absence of standardized compensation has contributed to facilitator attrition, workload strain, and uneven program quality. Strengthening and regularizing facilitator incentives—through dedicated LGU budget lines and complementary non-monetary support—is therefore critical to improving learner retention, instructional quality, and overall ALS effectiveness.

Key Findings and Policy Recommendations

1. National Policy Exists, but LGU Action Determines Impact

ALS is supported by strong legislation, yet learner outcomes depend largely on LGU leadership, funding priorities, and institutional support.

2. Community-Based Delivery Is Central to ALS Success
Barangay-level engagement and accessible CLCs significantly improve enrollment, attendance, and learner retention.

3. Enrollment Does Not Guarantee Completion
Without psychosocial support, flexible scheduling, and consistent instruction, many learners fail to complete ALS programs or pass the A&E examination.

4. Facilitator Support Is a Critical Quality Factor
Uneven honoraria and limited professional development undermine program effectiveness despite policy calls for professionalization.

Policy Recommendations for LGUs

1. Institutionalize ALS as a Core Local Development Priority

Integrate ALS into the Local Development Plan (LDP), Local Education Plan, and Annual Investment Program (AIP), and designate an ALS Focal Person or multi-sectoral ALS Committee.

2. Strengthen Community Learning Infrastructure
Conduct barangay-level CLC mapping to identify access gaps and prioritize investments in learning spaces using barangay halls, multipurpose centers, or other community facilities.

3. Invest in ALS Facilitators and Learner Support

Provide regular LGU-funded honoraria, transportation allowances, and non-monetary incentives, and support continuous professional development in coordination with DepEd.

4. Improve Monitoring and Evidence-Based Planning

Require annual ALS performance reports to the Sanggunian and integrate ALS data with DSWD social registry and Listahanan data to improve targeting and resource allocation

Table 5

LGU Action Plan for Strengthening ALS Implementation in the Philippines

Strategic Action	Responsible Office / Lead	Key Data Source / Reference	Indicative Timeline
Integrate ALS into the Local Development Plan (LDP), Local Education Plan, and AIP	Local Planning and Development Office (LPDO); Sanggunian; LCE	LDP, Local Education Plan, AIP; RA 11510; RA 11899	Next planning cycle (within 6–12 months)
Designate an ALS Focal Person or establish an ALS Committee	Office of the Mayor; Sanggunian; DepEd SDO	Executive Order / Sanggunian Resolution; DepEd ALS guidelines	Within 3 months
Establish a dedicated ALS budget line	Budget Office; Treasurer's Office; Sanggunian	LGU Annual Budget; DBM Local Budget Manual; AIP	Annual budget preparation cycle
Request Division-level ALS inventory (CLCs, coordinators, GPS data)	ALS Focal Person; DepEd SDO; FOI Officer	DepEd SDO records; DepEd FOI; EMIS	Within 1–3 months
Conduct barangay-level CLC mapping	ALS Committee; Barangay Councils; DepEd Field Offices	CLC Mapping Checklist; Barangay Records	3–6 months
Identify barangays without CLCs and prioritize investments	LPDO; ALS Committee; Sanggunian	CLC Mapping Results; LGU Infrastructure Inventory	After mapping (within 6 months)
Diversify ALS programs (literacy, A&E, life skills, employability)	DepEd SDO; ALS Facilitators; LGU Education Office	ALS Curriculum Framework; Local Labor Market Data	Ongoing / annual
Align ALS with TESDA and local employment programs	PESO; TESDA; ALS Committee	TESDA Training Regulations; PESO Employment Data	Within 6–12 months
Provide LGU-funded honoraria / incentives for ALS facilitators	Budget Office; Mayor's Office; Sanggunian	LGU Budget; COA Reports; EDCOM II Findings	Annual budget cycle
Support continuous training and mentoring for ALS facilitators	DepEd SDO; HRMO; ALS Committee	DepEd Training Plans; ALS Professional Development Programs	Ongoing
Improve CLC learning environments (minor rehab, furniture, materials)	Engineering Office; Barangay Councils; ALS Committee	CLC Condition Reports; LGU Infrastructure Plans	6–12 months

Require annual ALS performance reports to the Sanggunian.	ALS Focal Person; DepEd SDO	ALS Enrollment, Retention, Completion, A&E Data	Annually
Use ALS performance data to guide budget and policy decisions	Sanggunian; Budget Office; LPDO	ALS Performance Reports; AIP Reviews	Annual / mid-year reviews
Integrate Listahanan / social registry data for targeting	MSWDO; ALS Committee; DSWD	Listahanan; Local Social Registry	Annual update
Identify high-OSCYA barangays without ALS access	LPDO; ALS Committee	Listahanan + ALS + CLC Mapping Data	After data integration (6–9 months)

Note. Adapted from Department of Education (DepEd) guidelines, Republic Act No. 11510 (ALS Act of 2020), Republic Act No. 11899 (EDCOM II Act), and standard LGU planning and budgeting frameworks.

Conclusion

The Alternative Learning System is not a peripheral education initiative but a vital social development intervention that directly addresses educational exclusion, poverty, and workforce readiness. While national policies under RA 11510 and RA 11899 provide a strong legal foundation, their success depends on decisive and sustained LGU action. By strengthening ownership, investing in community-based delivery, supporting facilitators, and institutionalizing data-driven governance, LGUs can ensure that ALS fulfills its promise of inclusive, equitable, and transformative education for all.

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Declaration

This policy brief was developed with the assistance of generative AI for language refinement, structural organization, and policy drafting support. All data, interpretations, and policy positions remain the responsibility of the author

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