

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

Nineteenth Congress
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 672

Introduced by **Representative JOEY SARTE SALCEDA**

**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN GEOGRAPHICALLY
ISOLATED DISADVANTAGED CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS, AND
ACCESS ROADS LEADING TO LAST MILE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Never again would a child carry the burden of going to school by crossing the rapid waters or taking a long walk in a rough road, before the child gets to school – never.

This bill requires the convergence between the Department of Public Works and Highways and the Department of Education in comprehensive planning and constructing infrastructures that will benefit public students, as follows:

- 1) Geographically Isolated Disadvantaged Conflict-Affected Schools (GIDCAS)
- 2) Last Mile Public Schools
- 3) Access Roads to All Learners (ARAL)

It is the duty of the State to “protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.” The duty of the States also includes taking concrete steps towards achieving zero literacy by ensuring that the needs of the students are addressed, taking into consideration having adequate facilities and educational supplies and materials, accessible roads to schools and availability of teaching personnel.

Though many do not realize the connection between roads and education, economists have stressed for years that underinvestment in roads and education is holding the country back. According to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Report, only 14% of local roads are paved, compared to 69% of national roads. Local roads are generally of poor quality and condition, the same goes for the public school buildings. Worst, the absence of buildings and personnel for those located in Geographically Isolated Disadvantaged Conflict-Affected Areas (GIDCAAs) and in far-flung areas.

The schools in far-flung areas (or known as Last Mile Public Schools) are located in the farthest areas or hours away from the town centers and have less than four classrooms or any of the following:

- 1) Schools farthest/remotest from town centers
- 2) Schools with less than 4 classrooms
- 3) Schools with no electricity
- 4) Schools with more than 50% indigenous people learners
- 5) Schools with less than 100 learners
- 6) Schools with makeshift/non-standard rooms
- 7) Schools with no repairs/new projects for the last 4 years

Currently, there are 8000 last mile public schools in different parts of the country that needs to be empowered and strengthened. In addition, there is a need to upgrade school facilities that will provide teacher with more opportunities to improve teaching methods and provide students with new means of learning. Hence, the need to formulate such a policy.

Investment in infrastructures which ensures equitable access to education, most especially for those in geographically isolated and disadvantaged, and vulnerable is the key intent of this proposed legislation. It shall strengthen multi-sectoral linkages through the convergence between the Department of Public Works and Highways and the Department of Education and improve access and provision of quality, equitable, culture-based, and complete education.

This bill will be the roadmap of the education system in the next three (3) years that will bridge the gap, and navigate the way towards the development of families in geographically isolated disadvantaged conflict-affected communities. It is intended to break the barriers, and clear the roadblocks that hinder students from learning.

In view of the foregoing, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought


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Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Geographically Isolated Disadvantaged Conflict-Affected Schools (GIDCAS) and All Roads to All Learners (ARAL) Act”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.

It is also the policy of the State to promote and advance the right of every Filipino to education. The state recognizes the people’s need for a quality, affordable and adequate educational system as a tool in nation building.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Act:

- (a) Geographically Isolated Disadvantaged Conflict-Affected Areas (GIDCAAs) refers to communities with marginalized population physically and socio-economically separated from the mainstream society and characterized by physical factors and socio-economic factors.

- 1) Physical Factors - isolated due to distance, weather conditions, armed conflicts and transportation difficulties (island, upland, lowland, landlocked, hard to reach and unserved/underserved communities).
 - 2) Socio-economic Factors (high poverty incidence, presence of vulnerable sector, communities in or recovering from situation of crisis or armed conflict).
- (b) Access Roads to All Learners (ARAL) refers to all roads leading to the last mile public schools.
- (c) Last Mile Public Schools refers to schools in far flung areas, located in the farthest areas or hours away from the town centers and have less than four classrooms or any of the following:
- 1) Schools farthest/remotest from town centers
 - 2) Schools with less than 4 classrooms
 - 3) Schools with no electricity
 - 4) Schools with more than 50% indigenous people learners
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SEC. 4. *Coverage.* – The Department of Education (DepED) is hereby mandated to be the lead agency in the implementation of this Act. It is also mandated to formulate a guideline of requirements and to structure a timetable to ensure the implementation of this Act, in consultation with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), under the following circumstances:

- (a) All public schools nationwide that have no access roads;
- (b) All public schools in Geographically Isolated Disadvantaged Conflict-Affected Areas (GIDCAAs)
- (c) All school buildings under the criteria of Last Mile Public Schools

For this purpose, an inventory will also include all school buildings, whether fully functional or condemned, in all public elementary and secondary schools to determine the physical status of each structure.

School heads shall submit to their respective Schools Division Superintendents, for appropriate action, a report indicating the existence of or any need of repair, rehabilitation,

construction and structural damage under their respective supervisions. The exigency of constructing new school buildings is a priority in anticipation of the increase in student population by virtue of the implementation of Republic Act No. 10533, or the “Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013”.

SEC. 5. *Intra-connectivity Access.* – All schools under this coverage shall gain access to the availability of the programs under the Public Schools of the Future in Technology (PSOFT) that may be established by law or by the Department of Education, consistent with the emerging Fourth Industrial Revolution and socio-economic realities being shaped by shifting employment, demographic, cultural and other internal and external forces which may be spurred by fast-paced technological progress.

It shall also consider a satellite-based digital learning as alternative to the traditional mode of learning.

SEC. 6. *Period of Implementation.* – The programs under this Act shall be implemented within three (3) years.

SEC. 7. *Administrative Provision.* – Failure to act any of the programs provided under this Act and its Implementing Rules and Regulations by the DepEd and DPWH officials shall be dealt with accordingly by law through an administration action of suspension from government service.

SEC. 8. *Appropriations.* – The appropriation necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

SEC. 9. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SEC. 10. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,