

## PRESS RELEASE

**DepEd inks school building bayanihan with municipalities**

The goal of the Department of Education (DepEd) to address perennial classroom shortage in public schools is creating a bandwagon effect with the signing of an agreement with another organization of local executives to build more classrooms on a 50/50 sharing.

The memorandum of agreement signed today by DepEd, the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) is expected to significantly bridge the classroom gap which currently stands at over 152,000 on a single shift to meet the 1:45 ideal classroom students ratio.

In early January also this year, DepEd has inked an agreement with the League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP) to equally share the cost of building classrooms in areas where there are shortages.

Education Secretary Armin Luistro expressed his deep appreciation to local government executives who make education their priority. "We are thankful to our LGU partners who provide allocation for their education advocacy," said Luistro.

DepEd officials are confident that the department can close the classroom shortage gap in two years if the fund matching trend continues and if it finds more public and private partners who can come up with creative ways to fund school building construction.

Luistro said the 50/50 approach to addressing classroom shortage is very laudable and can be compared to modern-day "bayanihan."

"Dati kasi sa DepEd lang nakaatang ang school building construction at nakasuporta lang ang ibang ahensiya. Ngayon natutuwa kami kasi inaako na rin ng ibang sector ang responsibilidad na ito na parang isang modernong bayanihan," Luistro explained.

While DepEd budget allocation for 2011 increased by some 19%, it could hardly match the resource requirements of at least one million new entrants to the public school system every year.

Beginning school year 2011-2012, kindergarten has become compulsory in all public schools to better prepare pupils on the rigors of regular schooling.

"We need to build new classrooms each year because of increasing student population and replace ageing school buildings and those that were destroyed by calamities," he pointed out.

Under the counter-parting program, the initial 50% of the building cost will come from participating municipalities. The release of DepEd's 50 percent counter-part funds will be made upon receipt of certification from LGUs that their 50%

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share has been fully spent and that the construction is 50% complete as certified by DepEd's schools division superintendent.

The LMP shall encourage the full participation of its member LGUs in the schoolbuilding "bayahinan" program to make it a truly cooperative endeavor nationwide.

The league will also pass appropriate ordinance or resolution voluntarily committing portion of its special education fund (SEF), local development fund (LDF) and internal revenue allotment (IRA) and other possible sources to come up with the 50% counterpart funding for the school building project.

The DBM, for its part, will assist the DepEd in identifying the appropriate funding sources under its budget and facilitate the release of allotment upon submission of required documents.

Luistro is confident that more partners will turn up to help the government in addressing not only classroom backlogs but also shortages in teachers, textbooks, computers and other learning supplements.

"Let us ensure the success of these partnerships so that others who are waiting in the wings will also come out and do their share," Luistro said.

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