

## PRESS RELEASE

**DepEd listens to people's "voices" to meet EFA goal**

Members of Amnesty International held a program in front of the Department of Education office Friday morning to call for the eradication of poverty through education. They turned-over a suitcase of testimonies from individuals representing different places of the country to prompt the government to work to achieve universal primary education.

DepEd Undersecretary Alberto Muyot hosted the group to hear their concerns and dialogue with them. A known child rights advocate, he reaffirmed the commitment of the department of achieving education for all by 2015. "There is no turning back. We have a commitment and we need to achieve it no matter how difficult it takes."

Reminding DepEd of its Education for All commitment by 2015, Amnesty International urged DepEd to make concrete steps to achieve universal primary education and integrate human rights at the heart of the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal on primary education.

Muyot stressed that with the leadership of Secretary Armin Luistro, DepEd is serious in making this goal a reality. "We all know that to reach this goal, we have to address first the education deficits, the resource gaps within a specific period. We have to invest funds to provide the children the facilities and resources they need. Then from there, we can have a better foundation in meeting our goal."

Amnesty International, a movement of peoples who campaign for internationally recognized human rights, recently embarked into a campaign for the integration of human rights in the efforts for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as part of its Demand Dignity Campaign that seeks to end human rights abuses keeping people poor.

Amnesty International Philippines Director Dr. Aurora Parong said that, "30 out of every 100 Filipinos have a monthly income below the amount needed to acquire essential levels of food, housing and social services in order to live decently which means about 27 million Filipinos live in poverty. Consequently, regions with high poverty incidence like the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao have less than half of the children of school age are enrolled in the elementary or complete elementary education and suffer from incomplete school buildings, high malnutrition and child labor."

Muyot said that, "there have been modest improvements on education indicators but a lot of work still needs to be done. We are confident that DepEd is on the right track and we'll continue to push for bigger improvements as we uphold our commitment to the world."

Amnesty International went to DepEd to commemorate the World Poverty Eradication Day that is set on October 17. They collected testimonies from all over the country on poverty, universal primary education, and maternal

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mortality. These, according to them, “are evidence of the ongoing human rights violations that keep people poor.”

The movement believes, “that poverty reduction efforts, including the MDGs, have to be consistent with international human rights obligations of states. By ending abuses to rights related to deprivation, insecurity, exclusion and voicelessness will properly address poverty. Breaking the cycle of abuses and poverty requires accessibility to basic needs essential for a dignified life; active participation and empowerment of the poor, and accountability of government and other non-state actors.”

Parong also cited that while the Philippine Constitution states that the government shall establish and maintain a system of free public education in elementary and secondary levels, “the Philippine Progress Report on the Millennium Development Goals 2010 shows that the target of universal access to elementary education is at great risk of not being achieved, with recent low enrollees and high drop-outs.”

At the end of their dialogue, both parties agreed to work together to, first, set a plan of action that will set targets and milestones prioritize the areas that need more attention; second, to put more attention to accessibility of education, particularly to the far-flung areas; and, third, to realize our goal of universal primary education, with a strong emphasis on equity. Education for All with equity, that is.

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