

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **DepEd leads in record-breaking stand vs. poverty**

The Philippines topped the world record in participation to the United Nation's annual observance of the International Day of Poverty Eradication when some 35 million Filipinos stood up to campaign against poverty.

Of the figure, over 18 million were students and teachers from public and private schools who took part in the Stand Up, Take Action (SUTA) campaign to overcome extreme poverty mandated by the Department of Education through Memorandum 471.

DepEd mobilized the biggest participation --- 91% of total enrolment and teachers of all public and private elementary schools nationwide, some 12.6 million --- in gardening and tree planting activities organized from 3:00 to 5:00 pm last October 17.

"Our unified and well-coordinated effort to plant vegetables and fruit-bearing trees in all public and private elementary schools nationwide is an eloquent manifestation of our serious push to fight poverty," said Education Secretary Jesli Lapus.

Spearheaded by the United Nations in the Philippines and the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), with DepEd as a core member, the campaign drew 35.2 million Filipino participants.

The number of Philippine participants to the UN-initiated event was announced after a two-day tabulation by SGV & Co, the country's largest auditing firm.

As stipulated in the memorandum, all school staff, teachers and students were enjoined to plant vegetables and/or fruit-bearing trees within the school or community. The harvests are expected to supplement their school feeding program that will benefit the school community.

Seedlings and other tree planting materials were produced in school nurseries or secured in coordination with the Agricultural Offices and local DENR offices in their respective areas.

At the secondary level more than 6.2 million public and private high school students and teachers participated in nationwide population quiz and essay writing contests that bannered the same theme of poverty eradication.

Prior to these activities, teachers briefly presented the Millennium Development Goals to students in the classrooms to inculcate awareness on UN and government's efforts towards poverty reduction.

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The UN noted that the Philippines not only exceeded the target by some 20 million participants but also topped the world record in terms of percentage population and absolute numbers.

The country joined 191 member countries for this campaign.

This year's campaign revolved around the theme: "Mag-ina'y Sagipin, Bata'y Pag-aralin (Save Mother and Newborn, Send Children to School) to give focus on Millennium Development Goals 1 (Alleviating poverty and hunger), MDG 2 (Universal primary education) and MDG 5 (Improving maternal health).

DepEd Assistant Secretary for Special Projects Jonathan Malaya affirmed, "By our taking part in this campaign, we are making a collective effort to achieve the millennium goals particularly those geared towards education for all."

School heads were also encouraged to hold other SUTA activities like Child Find program, which encourages school aged children who are not in school to return to school. School officials can also organize activities to raise funds for the education of indigent children; and mobilize partners in Adopt-A-School Program to sustain efforts in rehabilitating more public schools to accommodate more enrollees.

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