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**DepEd: Support MDGs, volunteer for education**

As the government beefs up its efforts to move closer towards hitting the 2015 Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets, the Department of Education (DepEd) reaffirms its commitment to achieve universal primary education and the Education For All (EFA) goals.

With the declaration of President Benigno S. Aquino III of Year 2011 as the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers (IYV + 10) in the Philippines, DepEd vows to explore means to initiate appropriate programs in keeping with the country's commitment to democratize access to quality education as part of its EFA goals as well as the country's MDG targets by 2015. This year's celebration carries the global theme, "*Volunteering for the MDGs.*"

"We believe that the theme perfectly defines how EFA goal is attainable if Filipinos from all walks of life are able to volunteer for the cause of education in the country. We keep on saying that although DepEd is mandated to provide basic education to the Filipino children, education is not DepEd's concern alone but everybody's business. We are all accountable in the education of our people," said Education Secretary Armin Luistro.

In support of the Presidential Proclamation No. 92 by, the department issued DepEd Memo No. 32 series 2011 to inform all concerned offices with the said theme as guide.

Luistro added that the EFA goal, more than a commitment, is a guiding principle to make basic education accessible to as many learners that the Philippines can consider a solid investment for the future.

The MDGs are to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty; to achieve universal primary education; to promote gender equality and empower women; to reduce of child mortality; to improve of maternal health; to combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases; to ensure environmental sustainability; and to develop a global partnership for development.

For DepEd, its main concern is MDG No. 2. "The only way to achieve reforms in education and to achieve universal primary education, as well as to address resource gaps, is to engage all sectors of society. We should revive the spirit of bayanihan," Luistro said.

The Proclamation stated that, "volunteerism continues to be a cultural tradition upheld and practiced by the Filipinos, generation after generation, permeating the national psyche with humanitarian values."

"The government recognizes the contributions of the volunteer sector in nation building, and this provides legal framework to create an enabling environment for the promotion and strengthening of volunteerism in the country..," Proclamation No.2 furthered.

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“This is the very idea that the department is trying to practice when we explore ways by which we can provide the best quality education possible to our youth. Among the ways is to engage all education stakeholders, particularly the community and the local government so that we can create linkages to upgrade the quality of education in the country. The coming together of education stakeholders will be one of the many avenues that will lead DepEd to the fulfillment of its EFA goal,” noted Luistro.

One example of bayanihan in the department is the decentralization in education management through school-based management (SBM). It is now in full swing giving school heads the responsibility to secure resources for the school through networking with community stakeholders. SBM is among the five key reform thrusts of Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) to facilitate the attainment of the EFA goal and objectives.

Aimed at systematically improving basic education outcomes nationwide, BESRA has been effecting improvements in the basic education system. Among its major accomplishments are the formulation, issuance and adoption of key policies needed to put in place a transformed basic education system.

Meanwhile, on January, the goal of DepEd to address perennial classroom shortage in public schools is creating a bandwagon effect after the League of Cities of the Philippines and League of Municipalities of the Philippines each entered into an agreement with DepEd to equally share the cost of building classrooms in areas where there are shortages.

Last year, the department initiated new partnership modalities on top of its successful Adopt-A-School Program. DepEd has strengthened partnerships with the private sector, local government units, legislators, the academe, and development partners, to address urgent needs.

Luistro calls upon all Filipinos “to invest in the future of this country by turning into education volunteers” and by supporting the department’s thrust for bigger improvements as DepEd upholds its commitment to the world.

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