

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 5, 2009

OSYs give back to their families, communities

Seventeen-year old Christian Kimtaruc was giddy. He received his paycheck just before Christmas for which he brought home an LPG tank for his mother. "She will not use coal anymore," he shared.

Kimtaruc stopped schooling during his third year in high school because of poverty. He was among the 14,000 out-of-school youth beneficiaries in Tarlac and Pampanga who were given work after qualifying in the government's Out-of-School Youth Servicing Towards Economic Recovery (OYSTER), an emergency employment and livelihood project.

As utility worker for San Roque Elementary School in San Luis, Pampanga, he learned gardening, painting, fixing chair and other furniture. "Instead of being a bum I had to wake up early and learned to be more productive," he declared. Now he enjoys gardening and has since grown pechay and eggplant on his own backyard.

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said these OSYs have experienced helping their families and doing service for the community. The project was earmarked a budget of P7.5 million.

Project OYSTER stemmed from the directive of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to implement pro-poor programs in all regions to mitigate the effects of the global economic crisis. Lapus served as steward for Tarlac and Pampanga.

Since November, DepEd has sent some 1,500 OSYs as utility workers in public schools while more than 12,300 OSYs will start in January the production of medicinal soap for school children.

Emanuel Sanchez, Alternative Learning System (ALS) coordinator and Industrial Arts teacher in San Luis District in Tarlac explained, "We selected the really poor people and those we see fit to work as utility in the schools."

Some schools like San Roque E.S., because of its small population, had no utility person. "The teachers like us or members of the community had to do the part in school maintenance. So these OSYs were really a big help," Sanchez shared.

Sammy Sampang, ALS education supervisor in San Fernando City said that OYSTER project used stringent screening process so that only those who are qualified are taken in to the program. "We even had to validate and cross check with the barangay officials the list of participants to the OYSTER project," Sampang disclosed.

PRESS RELEASE

Pampanga Governor Ed Panlilio lauded DepEd for the hope it had rekindled among the OSYs. “May this project lead the beneficiaries to a more productive life,” he said.

Tarlac City Mayor Genaro Mendoza said the project has allowed OSYs to make something of themselves instead of just hanging around doing nothing. He said, “It was very timely and provided them practical skills.”

Parent Elmario Higanta, 46, affirmed that the project really helped his teenage son who became part of the program in Tarlac. He enthused, “My son now knows how it is to work and has learned some income-generating skills.”

Lapus urged the OSYs to take advantage of other government programs that can help them finish schooling and improve their lives. “If you have not finished high school, take the Accreditation and Equivalency Exam or the Philippine Education Placement Test to measure your life skills and get the chance to continue schooling.”

People's Champ Manny Pacquiao who is DepEd's poster boy for its Bureau of Alternative Learning System was among those who took advantage of these exams to pursue his education. Lapus added, “Let us follow Manny’s example. His phenomenal success did not stop him from pursuing his dream of earning a college degree.”

Beginning January 2009, OSYs will start making medicinal at health soaps like Citronella, Acapulco, and Calamansi. Each OSY is expected to earn P4,000 for making 2,000 bars of soap.

Secretary Lapus said, “We will give these soaps to public elementary school pupils who will receive their year's supply of four bars of Citronella soap for their head lice, four bars of Acapulco or Guava soap to combat skin diseases, and twelve bars of Calamansi soap for personal hygiene.”

The 20-day production period is expected to yield about 24.6 million bars, which will benefit more than 1.2 million children in Region III. Studies showed that 46% of children in Region III have pediculosis or head lice while 40% have skin diseases.

Like Kimtaruc, OSYs in Tarlac and Pampanga are starting to experience giving back not only to their families but also to their communities.

END

PRESS RELEASE