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DepEd to teach disaster risk reduction

The Philippines, a country prone to natural calamities because of its geographic location, need not be helpless when visited by typhoons, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and other natural hazards.

“These are the realities we have to live with. We should know what to do when disasters happen to lessen the devastation,” said Education Secretary Jesli A. Lapus.

These disasters result to death to many Filipinos and cause extensive damage to infrastructure and crops.

Thus, the Department of Education has developed modules and lesson exemplars on Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction to be used by teachers and students to help prepare schools in times of disasters.

“Safety lessons need to be taught in schools to reduce risk when disasters strike. These lesson exemplars educate our teachers and students how to respond to the situation,” Lapus added.

DepEd is set to start the integration of these materials in the secondary curriculum starting June 2010.

The newly-developed lesson exemplars and teacher/student modules was the department’s response to the recurrence of disasters in the country.

This initiative, in partnership with the National Coordinating Council (NDCC), is part of the project on Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction into Development, Policy, and Implementation in the Education sector. The main goal of this project is to educate our school children on the different kinds of hazards and how to respond to each of these when the need arises.

Meanwhile, Undersecretary Antonio Inocentes explained that the idea is not adding a new subject but integrating disaster risk reduction management into the curriculum. “We want to prepare our students and teachers so they would know what to do before, during, and after disasters. The focus actually is awareness, preparedness, and action,” Inocentes said.

These materials aim to educate our school children and prepare them for disasters and calamities that may strike without warning like the recent high intensity quakes that shook Haiti, Chile and Cagayan Valley.

According to Usec. Inocentes, these materials will be distributed to various schools in NCR, Region V, VIII, IX, CARAGA, and CAR. These areas are included in the 47 most vulnerable provinces in the country.

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The lesson exemplars and teacher/student modules are developed for secondary curriculum, specifically for Science I and Araling Panlipunan I. The learning competencies under Science I and Araling Panlipunan I were found suitable to be points of entries for the integration. Points of entries are lessons/topics where the topic of disaster can naturally be integrated.

The lesson exemplars contain strategies and methods of teaching disaster risk reduction. The modules, on the other hand, will serve as reference materials for students and teachers.

Usec Inocentes also added that it is important to train the sub-conscious mind of the children on how to react to these kinds of situation. "Through integration and reinforcement, they can make this skill an automatic reaction in case of disasters," Inocentes stressed.

Both the lesson exemplars and modules underwent a series of testing and validation. Experts from PAGASA, Philvocs, and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) evaluated the manuscripts of these materials. DepEd's Instructional Material Council Secretariat (IMCS) also reviewed and approved the materials for printing.

This project is supported and funded by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHO).

ADPC is an implementing arm of the Hygo Framework for Action 2005-2015, a global blue print for disaster risk reduction which aims to reduce disaster losses in lives, properties, social economic and environmental assets of communities and countries.

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