

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## DepEd engages OSYs for soapmaking

Drawing from the untapped skills of an otherwise idle workforce, the Department of Education has engaged the services of out-of-school youth (OSY) to produce health soaps that will benefit some 1.3 public school students in Central Luzon.

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said the cash-in-soap program is expected to give livelihood to jobless OSY while addressing the health concerns of pupils in public schools. The OSYs were trained on medicinal soap making by school health personnel who were trained by the Philippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care (PITAHC).

“We are counting on some 12,300 OSYs to produce herb-based health soaps which we intend to distribute to school children suffering from various skin ailments in Tarlac and Pampanga,” Lapus added.

The engagement of OSYs in soap making falls under the Comprehensive Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (CLEEP) being spearheaded by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Lapus was assigned to ensure and oversee the implementation of the various projects under the CLEEP in selected areas in Region III such as Tarlac and Pampanga.

The other CLEEP projects under the supervision of Lapus include utility services in public schools; livestock dispersal; irrigation restoration; construction of diversion dams and cultivation of organic fertilizer in the 1st district of Tarlac.

In the soap making livelihood activity, each OSY is expected to earn P4,000 for making 2,000 bars of soap. The 20-day production period is expected to yield about 24.6 million bars. The soap production is slated on April-June 2009. The soaps are expected to be given to student beneficiaries for school year 2009-2010.

“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,” said Lapus.

Lapus noted the program’s ‘multiplier effect’ on the local economy. “It will lead to the creation of more jobs and the generation of additional income.

The education chief believes that the soap-making venture can be a sustainable livelihood project. “There is a real need to produce medicinal soap at a minimal cost to keep our school children free from head lice and skin diseases,” he added.

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The distribution of soap is part of the Essential Health Care Package funded by local government units. The package consists of soap, toothpaste, toothbrush and deworming tabs.

Studies showed that 46% of children in Region III have pediculosis or head lice while 40% have skin diseases. Children with such health conditions have been observed to feel shy and do not actively participate in class activities.

According to Assistant Secretary for Special Concerns Thelma Santos, the program is one of DepEd's efforts to show concern to our pupils and improve their participation rate and retention.

Last 2008, DepEd has sent some 1,500 OSYs as utility workers in public schools. Lopus shared, "We can tap partners in the community who can take this project to the next level. We see the local government units who are always in the look-out for livelihood opportunities and the private sector which can also pitch in to better improve the technology and marketing."

CLEEP aims to mitigate the effects of the global economic crisis. The cabinet secretaries served as stewards to various regions and were assigned their respective priority projects.

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