

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **DepEd and UNICEF build safer schools for children**

How do you optimize use of our school buildings?

A school building should be fit not only for learning but must also be functional in times of natural disasters. This is the ideal school building as envisioned by the Department of Education and the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund.

On November 17, 2008, DepEd Secretary Jesli Lapus and UNICEF Country Representative Vanessa Tobin will lead a turn-over ceremony of one of the completed school buildings under UNICEF's Safe Schools Project at the Rawis Elementary School in Legaspi City.

At present, there are 16 hazard-resilient school buildings in Region V which suffered from a succession of natural calamities in the past few years.

Lapus said that "DepEd is currently stepping-up its efforts to strengthen capacities of public schools for disaster risk reduction. With the help of UNICEF, the school can truly become a child-friendly place."

This hazard-resilient model utilizes concrete and steel that make for sturdy buildings. The roof is reinforced by concrete beams to withstand pressure, and is covered by felt fabric to make it waterproof. To protect the books and armchairs against flooding, the floor line is built one meter above natural soil.

Schools built after this model are provided with steel doors and windows, and are expected to last for 50 years.

These standard two-classroom buildings are intended for both learning and public use. These can be used as evacuation centers during calamities and emergencies. Each classroom can accommodate 63 students or at least six families.

Traditional models for public schools cannot accommodate several families and have incomplete facilities, thus disrupting teaching and learning activities.

The DepEd Chief added that "with this initiative, DepEd's services are not only limited to the students – its impact will reach the entire community. I call on the local government units to work with DepEd in making child-friendly learning environments for our learners."

UNICEF's program for Education in Emergencies is managed by DepEd's Educational Development Projects Implementing Task Force.

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