

PRESS RELEASE

DepEd walks the extra mile

The Department of Education is working hand in hand with the local government unit of Laua-an in Antique to build a new bridge that will provide better access for residents of a community composed mostly of grade school students. This move comes after the collapse of a bamboo footbridge last September 15 resulting to the untimely death of **four students and one still missing**.

Upon learning about the incident, Education Chief Armin Luistro, together with Assistant Secretary and Chief of Staff Reynaldo Laguda, immediately scheduled a trip to Antique to grieve with and express his heartfelt sympathy to the families of the victims.

“As much as possible, I want to personally have a full grasp of the real state of public education in the country. This is the reason why I’ve been doing my rounds of school visits in various areas. With this unfortunate incident, as we sympathize with the families of the victims, I want to personally appeal to the local government to prioritize the building of a proper bridge in Laua-an so that this tragedy will not happen again,” said Luistro.

Luistro, with local DepEd officials headed by District Superintendent Aldigunda Tatoy, and local government officials, hiked for an hour to visit the school site located in a remote barangay. This gave Luistro a chance to meet with Congressman Paulo Javier and Gov. Ezekiel Javier regarding the building of a new bridge.

“I’m happy that by visiting the place myself, I was able to talk to Cong. Javier and he said he has realigned his funds to have a proper bridge made,” Luistro told.

It may be noted that DepEd pushes for initiatives in line with President Aquino’s 10-point education agenda. Among the things the government want for education is to establish a covenant with the local government units.

“Since education is the great equalizer, such a partnership would be the concrete embodiment and manifestation of democracy in action at the grassroots level. And it would advance economic development—the main agenda of local governments—given that education holds the key to progress”, explained Luistro.

Based on the report submitted by Supt. Tatoy, the bamboo bridge was built 35 years ago through the efforts of teachers, parents, Parent Teachers Association (PTA) members and barangay officials. The school principal takes the lead of having it repaired during Brigada Eskwela every year. A total of 256 pupils (preparatory to grade 6) from 7 barangays cross the bridge everyday because there is no other way to reach the school. Classes are suspended whenever the water level is high. Now that the bridge is broken, students have to cross the river by foot.

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After the Secretary's visit, members of the community are hopeful that they will finally see the realization of a proper bridge that will ensure the safety of students in Laua-an.

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