

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DepEd's Project ReACh targets 5M out of school kids

"A strong partnership with local government units (LGUs) is half of the solution in bringing to school some 5.6 million out of school children and youth," said Education Secretary Jesli Lapus.

Under Project ReACh (Reaching All Children), the Department of Education (DepEd) is banking on the active involvement of LGU and barangay officials to "find these school-aged children, reach out to them and keep them in school."

Project ReACh targets elementary and high school enrollees.

"Although it is the main responsibility of DepEd to ensure that all school-aged children are in school, local officials play a key role in identifying out of school children in the community and in bringing educational intervention right at the barangay level," explained Lapus

Project ReACh enjoins all community stakeholders to extend assistance even beyond the workplace and even beyond their working hours when necessary to minimize, if not, eradicate potential school drop-outs.

A second enrolment is slated in October for the targeted unschooled students. They will be offered flexible alternative learning modules to catch up on their education. "I enjoin the parents to keep in touch with the local education officials or barangay leaders so as not to miss this chance to get education," Lapus stressed.

Project REACH embarks on a combination of strategies using innovative "catch and hold" interventions.

One of these is Modified In School/Out School (MISOSA) for elementary where students are given a set of lessons through modules that respond to their unique needs as learners who may not always be inside the classroom to get their education.

On the other hand, Project EASE is intended for high school students who are considered seasonal absentees because of justifiable reasons. "Under this scheme, learners are provided learning modules which they can study at home," said Prudencia Sanoy, team leader of DepEd's Drop-Out Reduction Program.

The Open High School, meanwhile, is another alternative learning delivery which does not require the presence of students inside the classroom. "This is distance learning using the same module as that of Project EASE," added Sanoy.

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Four batches of DepEd-LGU strategic planning have been lined up in September to plot action plans in the implementation of Project REACH at the community level.

For Regions VI, VII, and VIII, the planning is slated in Ecotech, Cebu City from September 15-16. For Regions I, II, III and CAR, it will be conducted in Teachers Camp Baguio City on September 24-25 and for Regions IX, X, XI, XII, and CARAGA, it is scheduled in RELC, Davao City on September 28-29.

For Regions IV-A, IV-B, V and NCR, the meeting was held in Marikina Hotel last September 2-3.

According to the education chief, "Despite Philippine basic education being free, we still have a staggering number of school-age children and youth out in the streets who face exploitation in all forms."

For school year 2007-2008, some 2.2 million children aged 6 to 12 years old and 3.4 million 12-15 years old out-of-school youth or a total of 5.6 million are reported to be not in school.

Project ReACh bridges and strengthens the capacity of the school, the local government units, and other government agencies mandated to deliver basic services to its citizens.

This is in line with the Department's thrust of achieving the 2015 Education for All (EFA) targets.

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