

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPTEMBER 5, 2008

“End child labor, bring them back to school”—Lapus

The Department of Education (DepEd) today signed an agreement with World Vision Development Foundation (WVDF) to step up efforts in bringing more than 800,000 Filipino children toiling as laborers back to the classroom.

Through the ABK2 Initiative, or Pag-aaral ng mga Bata Para sa Kinabukasan, DepEd and WVDF will jointly raise public awareness and mobilize resources to combat child labor and promote school attendance.

“Our children are supposed to be in school and not on the streets or in sweatshops working under horrible conditions,” said Education Secretary Jesli Lapus.

ABK2 is a four-year project funded by the United States Department of Labor that aims to contribute to the reduction of exploitative child labor in the Philippines.

According to Elnora Avarientos, executive director of WVDF, the six identified sectors where child labor is particularly rampant are in commercial agriculture (sugarcane plantation), domestic work, pyrotechnics business, mining, quarrying, sex trade and scavenging.

DepEd backs the project in the form of policy and technical support that will provide child laborers access to quality and relevant education programs.

Based on the 2007 sub-regional multiple indicator cluster survey conducted by the National Statistic Office and the United Nation Children’s Emergency Fund in 2007, some 830,000 children in the Philippines, or 16% of all children, are classified as child laborers. Of these, about 670,000 children both attend school and work as child laborers.

The Education Chief added that even if poverty is the major cause for such a sorry situation, these 830,000 children, undeniably, remain the responsibility of DepEd. “We are accountable to them in terms of their education. This is one of our major concerns,” added Lapus.

DepEd has vigorously pursued non-traditional programs to increase the participation and retention rates of school children, especially those burdened by difficult circumstances.

This includes the “Child Find” program which is focused on reaching the unreached children who are out of school. DepEd is also holding multi-grade classes. It now has 24,882 such classes all over the country.

PRESS RELEASE

The multi-grade class is where students of different grade levels are handled by a single teacher. “It not only provides access to education for children who are otherwise out of school, it also addresses the quality of education we provide to this sector,” said Assistant Secretary Teresita Inciong.

Through its Bureau of Alternative Learning Systems, DepEd is implementing the Accreditation and Equivalency Test and the Philippine Education Placement Test to give learners outside of the classroom a chance to return to the educational mainstream.

According to Lopus, DepEd has also strengthened the curricular offerings of its 261 Tech-Voc schools to encourage children to go into skills training programs that have employment value.

ABK2 project associates are Christian Children’s Fund represented by national director Ana Maria Locsin and Educational Research and Development Assistance Foundation whose executive director is Dolora Cardeno.

END

PRESS RELEASE