

4,000 high school beneficiaries in Central Luzon join the Regional Pantawid Pamilya Graduation

(City of San Fernando, Pampanga) The Department of Social Welfare and Development Field Office III (DSWD FO III) conducted a Regional Graduation of Pantawid Pamilya High School students on April 29, 2015 at Bren Z. Guaio Convention Center, in this city with the theme "Pagtatapos Nyo, Tagumpay ng Pilipino."

Dubbed as "Pagdiriwang para sa Pantawid Pamilya Graduates ng 2015", the activity aims to recognize the beneficiaries for working hard to fulfill their dreams in finishing high school.

About 4,500 graduating students, parents, partner-agencies such as Department of Education, Department of Labor and Employment and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, Philippine Information Agency and media-partners participated in the said event.

Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program in Central Luzon has already produced 25,272 high school graduates this year among the more than 300,000 graduates nationwide who are considered the first batch since the program extended the educational assistance to high school.

Of the 25,272 graduates, 710 are from Aurora; 1,487 are from Bataan; 5,624 are from Bulacan; 4,777 are from Pampanga; 3,734 are from Tarlac; 7,355 are from Nueva Ecija and 1,585 from Zambales.

In her welcome remarks, Regional Director Gemma B. Gabuya said, "this celebration serves as a venue for the graduating students to be linked to opportunities such as scholarship, internship, part time job that will help them realize their dream of finishing their studies; an orientation on academic and career opportunities through DOLE, TESDA, and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) will share their respective

programs and services.”

Meanwhile, Dr. Mariano C. De Jesus, President of Bulacan State University said during his Keynote Speech, “The greatest gift you can have is education. You gain an access to quality program through DSWD’s Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program. You are lucky because you are chosen.” Dr. De Jesus encouraged the beneficiaries to always dream, because everything starts with a dream.

In her valedictory address, Alexandra Garce of Laur, Nueva Ecija said, “Malaking bahagi ang Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program sa aking pag-aaral sa High School. Ngayon may katiyakan na ang aking mga pangarap. Mag-aaral akong mabuti at sisikaping maging CPA.” She ended her speech by thanking President Aquino and DSWD for the opportunity of being part of the program.

DSWD FO III sent four (4) top academic achievers that represented the region in the National graduation held at Araneta Coliseum on April 23, 2015, wherein President Benigno Aquino III was the keynote speaker. In his speech he said, *“At sa araw na ito, pinipitas natin ang paunang bunga ng ating pagbabayanihan sa pamamagitan ng Pantawid Pamilya. Ipinagdiriwang natin ang pagtatapos ng 333,673 kabataang bumubuo sa kauna-unahang batch ng high school beneficiaries. Bahagi po sila ng halos 754,400 kabataan sa buong bansa na kasalukuyang nasasaklawan ng tulong ng programa para sa Secondary Education.”*

PantawidPamilya is a human development program that invests in the health and education of poor households primarily those with children aged 0-18. It provides cash grants to partner-beneficiaries who comply with the conditions of sending their children to school, bringing them to health centers for checkups, and attending the monthly Family Development Sessions (FDS). ### (A.M. Delicano)