

DSWD, ASEAN representatives conclude Regional Inter-Sectoral Consultation to strengthen roles of social workers, wider social service workforce



Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Undersecretary Vilma Cabrera, as the Philippine Senior Officials Meeting on Social Welfare and Development (SOMSWD) Leader, chairs the ASEAN Inter-Sectoral Consultation to enhance the Regional Guidance on Strengthening the Role of Social Work and the wider Social Service Workforce in Health and the Justice System via online platform.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the focal agency representing the Philippines in the ASEAN Sectoral Body on Social Welfare and Development, hosted the virtual consultation in cooperation with the ASEAN Social Work Consortium, the ASEAN Secretariat and with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) East Asia and Pacific Regional Office.

The successfully concluded ASEAN Inter-Sectoral Consultation held on February 7 and 8, was attended by the members of the ASEAN Social Work Consortium, representatives from the relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, the ASEAN Secretariat, the UNICEF and other UN agencies, as well as government and non-government organizations.

The virtual consultation aimed to gather feedbacks and inputs

from participants to enhance the Draft Regional Guidance on Strengthening the Role of Social Workers and the Wider Social Service Workforce in Health; and the Draft Regional Guidance on Strengthening the Role of Social Workers and the Wider Social Service Workforce in the Justice System.

During the opening of the consultation, Secretary Rex Gatchalian expressed his support for the goal of the activity.

“Consistent with our commitment to the Hanoi Declaration on Strengthening Social Work towards a cohesive and responsive ASEAN community, and its accompanying ASEAN roadmap, the Philippines remains to be a strong advocate for the progressive strengthening of social workers and the wider social service workforce recognizing their valuable contribution in the promotion and protection of the marginalized and vulnerable sectors of the society,” Secretary Gatchalian said.

The Hanoi Declaration on Strengthening Social Work adopted by the State Leaders during the 37th ASEAN Summit in November 2020, was considered to be the first regional framework for social work to accelerate the collective action for the strengthening, recognition, and advancement of social work in ASEAN.

“Aiming for the standard and responsive delivery of social services to uplift the quality of life of all people in the ASEAN region, particular attention is needed to plan, develop and support its workforce. A well-defined and evidence-based frameworks and strategies will ensure that the social workers and the wider social service workforce are prepared to respond to the emerging issues and the challenges of the fast changing landscapes for social welfare and development,” the Secretary added.

The participants of the virtual consultation articulated issues in social work practice and recommendations which

include the need to plan and develop multi-disciplinary training opportunities and an effective curriculum to improve the competencies of social workers based in the medical field and justice system of ASEAN Member States (AMS).

Likewise, the panel also suggested to highlight the importance of social workers in both fields and to strengthen coordination among AMS through the development of data collection systems and information management.

The DSWD hopes that through the inputs from the participants, the two regional guidance documents will be able to help advance the condition of social work practice in the ASEAN Region.

The two outcome documents are expected to be endorsed for notation of the State Leaders during the ASEAN Summit in November 2023. ###