

Addressing hunger and malnutrition, DSWD priority – Sec. Gatchalian

Newly-confirmed Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Secretary Rex Gatchalian on Tuesday emphasized that it is high time for the government to increase the budget for the Supplementary Feeding Program (SFP) to ensure that its goal of addressing hunger and malnutrition in the country is attained.

“Iyong masabi lang na may feeding program pero hindi naman natin pinondohan nang tama, ay nakalulungkot (It is sad to say that we have a feeding program, but we do not fund it properly),” Secretary Gatchalian said in reply to Senator Grace Poe’s query during the deliberation of the CA’s Committee on Labor, Social Welfare, and Migrant Workers.

Secretary Gatchalian called for the support of various stakeholders, particularly of the legislators, saying that “we really need to put the effort in moving that budget to 27 pesos per head or else we are going around the circle or if I may dare say so, that it is going to be wasteful spending.”

Currently, a Php21.00 fund per child enrolled in the Child Development Center (CDC) and Supervised Neighborhood Play was allotted for the implementation of the feeding program.

“We would again push for 27 pesos because iyong 21 is not enough. Parang ang nangyayari lang, nilagyan natin ng pondo para masabi lang na may feeding program tayo (It seems like what’s happening is that we allocated funds just to say that we have a feeding program),” the DSWD chief pointed out.

According to Secretary Gatchalian, a massive survey among the program implementers of the SFP was conducted by the DSWD to determine which among the different modalities of feeding

program is the most effective.

The feeding program modalities include a central kitchen, raw goods procurement by DSWD, and local government direct implementation, the DSWD secretary said.

Secretary Gatchalian also mentioned that the DSWD partnered with the Department of Health (DOH), the World Bank (WB) and other concerned agencies to implement the Philippine Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Program (PMNP) in an effort to harmonize the delivery of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions to reduce stunting in targeted localities around the country.

“While DOH takes care of the nutrition-specific program, the DSWD takes care of nutrition sensitivity. Meaning, study shows it is not just about feeding them but also about the overall quality of the environment for the first 1000 days,” the Secretary explained.

For its part, the DSWD will focus on providing and holding community-based nutrition service delivery and multi-sectoral nutrition convergence through the Kapit-Bisig Laban Sa Kahirapan – Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (Kalahi-CIDSS) program, including the construction of WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools) facilities and improvement of food security facilities among others.

“It is a community-driven program that says ano ba ang kulang sa iyong maliit na lugar. So these are the poorest LGUs with the highest stunting rates. They have been pre-selected... Sa amin kasi, nutrition-sensitive so meaning wala ka bang wash facilities? Wala ka bang day care center? Things that will aid nutrition” (It is a community-driven program that aims to identify what is lacking in your small area. So these are the poorest local government units (LGUs) with the highest stunting rates. They have been pre-selected... For us, it is nutrition-sensitive, meaning, do you lack wash facilities? Do

you lack a daycare center? Things that will support nutrition), the Secretary added.

Among the goals of the PMNP is to achieve key impacts on the health and nutrition of every Filipino child, as well as to strengthen the LGUs' capacities in terms of primary healthcare delivery of maternal and child health services. #