

# **DSWD's first-ever agricamp offers new lease on life for kids in conflict with the law**

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has tied up with the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) and the Pampanga State Agricultural University (PSAU) for the establishment of the country's first-ever agricamp in Pampanga that will be an important part of the rehabilitation process of children in conflict with the law (CICL).

"The implementation of the agricultural camp titled Sowing Seeds of Hope Through Sustainable Farming will benefit children in conflict with the law here in the region, and probably throughout the Philippines, if they will be admitted and committed to the agricultural camp here," DSWD Undersecretary for International Affairs, Attached and Supervised Agencies Emmeline Aglipay-Villar, who represented Secretary Rex Gatchalian, said during the project's agreement signing on Wednesday (April 24) at the Haven for Girls in Magalang town.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by Undersecretary Villar, BuCor Director General Gregorio P. Catapang Jr., and PSAU President Dr. Anita G. David.

"Since the passage of the Juvenile Justice Welfare (JJW) Act, 18 years ago, there still has not been any, not a single one, agricultural camp in the country," Undersecretary Villar pointed out.

According to the DSWD official, the JJW Act states that children in conflict with the law may be sheltered in an agricultural camp or other training facilities "in order for the child to be properly rehabilitated and then reintegrated into society after".

“It is really such a joy for me to finally make this first step to develop the program for the agricultural camp. All of this is for the children because the children are our most valuable resource and they are our hope for the future,” Undersecretary Villar explained.

As proposed by Secretary Gatchalian, the agricamp will offer vocational training and hands-on work experience for CILC along sustainable food production while they are preparing for reintegration into their respective communities.

Undersecretary Villar said the Pampanga agricamp will offer another lease on life for children in conflict with the law by introducing them to sustainable agriculture.

“The children are the most vulnerable, and more so those who are in conflict with the law, who are victims themselves, victims of their circumstance, victims of abuse, exploitation, who in turn, turn to these acts because of their situation. And this is such a fitting project for them,” the DSWD official stressed.

The agricamp aims to achieve a multifaceted impact, encompassing both sustainable agriculture and positive rehabilitation outcomes, for children in conflict with the law.

The 5,000 square meter agricamp in the vicinity of PSAU will be established with areas for vegetable, orchard and animal production. It will also have a verma-composting area, modern greenhouse system, irrigation system, barnyard, ornamental garden and learning center.

Witnessing the MOU signing were Magalang Municipal Mayor Maria Lourdes Lacson; DSWD Asst. Secretary Elaine Fallarcuna; DSWD Field Office-3 (Central Luzon) Regional Director Venus Rebuldele; Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (JJWC) Executive Director Atty. Tricia Clare A. Oco; and PSAU Vice-President for Research, Innovation, Extension and Training Dr.

Geraldine Sanchez.

DSWD Administrative Service Director Karina Antonette A. Agudo and DSWD – Central Luzon Assistant Regional Director for Administration Maribel M. Blanco also attended the signing ceremony. #