

# **DSWD welcomes PBBM's E.O. designating Secretary Gatchalian chair of Zero Hunger Task Force**

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) on Monday (May 22) welcomed the designation of DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian as chairperson of the re-organized Inter-Agency Task Force on Zero Hunger.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has issued an executive order reorganizing the Inter-Agency Task Force on Zero Hunger, as 2.7 million Filipino families continue to experience hunger during the first quarter of the year, according to the latest survey of the Social Weather Station.

The DSWD Secretary was designated as Head of the Zero Hunger Task Force following the issuance of Executive Order No. 27 series of 2023 on May 18, which recalibrated and reorganized the Task Force.

Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin signed Executive Order 27 for the President amending E) 101 issued by the previous administration in January 2020.

Under the new E0, the President designated the secretary of the DSWD as the task force's chairperson. The executive director of the National Nutrition Council (NNC) and the secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA) will serve as co-chairperson and vice chairperson, respectively.

Members of the recalibrated IATF on Zero Hunger include the Secretaries of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Labor and Employment

(DOLE), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and Chairperson of Commission on Higher Education (CHED), as well as a representative from the Office of the President (OP).

### **Addressing hunger and poverty**

Since he assumed office on January 31 this year, DSWD Secretary Gatchalian has laid out programs and special projects to fight hunger and poverty in the Philippines, including the implementation of digital food stamps.

DSWD Spokesperson and Assistant Secretary Romel M. Lopez pointed out that the program is aimed at insulating 1 million poor families who do not have access to nutritious foods.

“Sa halip na pipila kayo dati o mag-aabang ng relief goods although kahit naka-preposition na ‘yan, ngayon po bibigyan na natin ng laya iyong mga kababayan natin sa tulong ng food stamps. With the help of our partner merchandise at mga suppliers ay maaari na nilang kuhain doon sa mga ka-tie up natin na supermarket iyong kanilang mga pangangailangan. Food stamp na lang po ang kanilang dala-dala (Instead of lining up and waiting for relief goods, though these are already prepositioned, this program will provide freedom to its recipient to buy goods of their choice in our partner grocery stores and supermarkets. All they have to do is to bring their food stamp and use it to buy their basic necessities),” Asst. Secretary Lopez said.

The Food Stamp program was proposed by the DSWD to the President as one of the current Administration’s priority programs, which aims to address the hunger problem that many communities in the country are experiencing, the DSWD spokesperson noted.

“One of the things that is in the pipeline, that is being

developed, that is going to be of great assistance to our people is a proposal by the DSWD for a food stamp program, which I am surprised that we have never had, but it is something that we can see that has been effective in other countries,” President Marcos had said in an interview.

To date, the Department is now in the thick of things to operationalize this initiative, according to Asst. Secretary Lopez.

“With his enthusiasm to address hunger and achieve food security in the country, Secretary Gatchalian will be able to lead the Task Force in ensuring that government policies, initiatives, and projects on attaining zero hunger are responsive and effective,” the DSWD spokesperson said. #

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## **Gov’t food stamp program to be pilot tested 2nd half of 2023 – DSWD**

In line with the Marcos’ administration program to alleviate hunger and poverty among families belonging to the lowest income bracket, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is set to pilot-test its food stamp program in the second half of the year, Secretary Rex Gatchalian said on Tuesday.

In a press briefing in Malacañang, the DSWD chief said they are now in the design stage of the program to properly fill in the gaps that may be overlooked during its implementation.

“Mayroon na tayong first draft ng design and we will spend the remaining months of May and June in the design stage. We all

know that the devil will be in the details and we have hired multiple consultants in the department to take a second look at what's being designed para may check and balance," Gatchalian said.

"We are working with PSA's [Philippine Statistics Authority] in-house poverty expert who is their Usec – Usec. Dennis Mapa – he is helping us craft the concept there. So, the remaining days of May and June, we will work on designing it. Now, July to December will be the pilot run to vet the (program) properly," Gatchalian added.

With the help of the Marcos administration's economic team, Gatchalian said they are trying to package the financing side of the food stamp program of the national government, hoping to launch the actual run in the first quarters of next year.