

Day Care Workers' Welfare ASSERTED During Their 36th Regional Assembly

"Naging magulang kayo [Day Care Workers], hindi naging teachers – 'yan ang hindi natin matatawaran. You are our unsung heroes," said Director Gemma B. Gabuya of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Field Office III in her inspirational message. This remark raised the morale of some 2,400 Day Care Workers who attended the 36th Regional Assembly of Daycare Workers held in Nueva Ecija Convention Center, Palayan City on 7 June 2018.

Theme: Sa pagpapaunlad at pagbabago ng kabataan, Child Development Worker na may malasakit ang kailangan.

The Unsung Heroes

Exactly 40 years ago, Day Care was developed by DSWD to provide child protection. This concept was created to serve the poor families who cannot afford to hire a *yaya* to look after their children while parents are trying their best to be economically productive. This was further institutionalized through Presidential Decree (PD) 1567 or the Barangay Day Care Center Law of 1978.

Their primary role is to foster an ideal setting for early child care and development. "Hindi biro ang magdevelop ng 3-4 years-old na mga bata," affirms Dir. Gabuya. In fact, the first years of a child are considered the most fortunate and crucial stage in a person's growth and development. This is why Ms. Elvira Ronquillo, PSWDO of Nueva Ecija believes that Day Care Workers have a big part on whatever the children will achieve in the future.

As of this writing, there is around 4,000 Day Care Workers in Central Luzon.

Legal Bases

Aside from PD 1567, the following are notable national laws and policies which support the need to protect and promote the welfare and development of Filipino children were identified

by Ms. Elizabeth Baybayan, PSWDO of Pampanga:

- PD 603 (The Child and Youth Welfare Code of 1974)
- Republic Act (RA) 6972 (Barangay Level Total Development and Protection of Children of 1990)
- RA 8980 (Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Act of 2000)
- RA 10410 (Early Years Act of 2013).

These policies recognize ages zero (0) to eight (8) years-old as a crucial stage for educational development, strengthen the ECCD System, and appropriate funds for their respective implementation. Ms. Joanne Guerrero, ECCD Focal Person of PSWDO Pampanga, highlighted the fact that “Day Care Workers, who are also referred to as Child Development Workers (RA 10410), play a vital role in the implementation of these laws as well as in the facilitation of children’s overall growth and development.” However, there are no laws passed yet to institutionalize the employment of Day Care Workers.



Ms. Joanne Guerrero, ECCD Focal Person of PSWDO Pampanga presenting their concept paper.

The Pressing Situation

It is with no doubt; Day Care Workers are needed for nation building but Ms. Guerrero asked, “What if these employed child development workers are not able to get the just compensation, humane working conditions, and supportive supervision that our government promises to ensure?”

PSWDO of Pampanga conducted a Profiling of Day Care Workers from 2015 to 2017 that gave a clear picture of the current status of the DCWs in the province. The following are the highlights of their report:

- 58 or 8.87% day care workers are 56 years old and above but still without retirement benefits;
- 530 or 81 % graduated in college. This could mean that ECCD can be an option of the professionals;
- Only 129 or 21.39% of the day care workers receive a total monthly subsidy/salary amounting to P6,001 –

P7,000 from the barangay, municipal and provincial level. That's less than a quarter of the DCWs;

- 569 or 87% of the day care workers are non-plantilla – this vast majority belongs in any of the following statuses: job order, subsidy or volunteer. Only 56 or 8.56% are permanent and 29 or 4.43% are casual;
- 58 or 8.87% day care workers have given 26-30 years in service while 23 or 3.52% have dedicated 36-40 years in their jobs.

“It has been years since the implementation of the laws covering the development and protection of our children. However, majority of our Day Care Workers are still regarded as unsung heroes of this country.”

The Advocacy

It was November last year when the House of Representatives approved on the third and final reading of House Bill No. 6550 which seeks to establish a Magna Carta for Day Care Workers. The said bill stipulated the following:

- PROVISION OF PLANTILLA POSITIONS
- IMPROVE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING DCWs
- OVERTIME PAY
- HAZARD ALLOWANCE
- SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE
- SOCIAL INSURANCES SUCH AS GSIS, PAG-IBIG, PHILHEALTH

According to Guerrero, they believe that providing a just compensatory measure for our Day Care Workers secures not just the workers themselves but also the continuity of the ECCD as a program. LGUs' commitment and responsiveness to this call will not only benefit its citizens but also its standing and reputation in the provision of good quality childcare.

Fun-filled DCWs Regional Assembly

Different DCWs sub-federations from provinces and cities shared good practices such as the creation of some permanent positions in the local level, conduct of different activities and above-standard facilities and infrastructures.

The highlight of the assembly was the regional choral competition. All performers were all dressed up in fancy costumes. All of them sung Filipino nursery songs and made

them sound as sophisticated as can be. Mabalacat City won the city federation category while Nueva Ecija for the provincial category.



Photo opportunity for the winners with Elena Carreon, Regional Nutritionist of DSWD FO III and Elizabeth Baybayan, PSWDO of Pampanga