

PRESS RELEASE**DepEd partners with Save the Children Philippines, Prudence Foundation for Comprehensive School Safety Program**

ORTIGAS, PASIG CITY, January 16, 2019—The Department of Education (DepEd) formally forged a partnership with Save the Children Philippines and Prudence Foundation for the Education Safe from Disasters Program, which aims to transform national systems and help reduce the risks of natural and human-induced hazards to children, and to establish an effective information management and communication system that will increase the safety and preparedness capacity of all schools in the country.

"Safety is everyone's job. In the Department of Education, we have worked hard on mainstreaming the Comprehensive School Safety Framework into the education system which aims to strengthen the pillars of safe learning facilities, school disaster management, and risk reduction and resilience education for schools," DepEd Undersecretary for Administration Alain Del Pascua underscored in the program launch at Marco Polo Hotel in Ortigas, Pasig City.

With the theme, "Developing an Ecosystem for Comprehensive School Safety in the Philippines," the program shall build an enabling environment that will empower all stakeholders to realize the goals of the Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF)—a global framework aimed at reducing risks from hazards throughout the education sector by addressing the stated three pillars of school safety.

Atty. Alberto Muyot, Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children Philippines, cited that the learners spend an average of five to eight hours a day in schools during weekdays, and that their safety and survival are critical while they are away from parents and guardians. He added that from 2007 to 2012, major disasters affected around 11 million schoolchildren in the Philippines, jeopardizing their right to survival and basic education.

"Schools are centers for nurturing children," Muyot said. "We want to ensure that schools not only give children access to education, but also guarantee their safety and survival in times of emergencies."

The program shall establish an integrated disaster management system within DepEd to continuously improve knowledge and capacity of all its personnel and learners on CSS across all levels: national, regional, division, and school. Online resources and tools, and training will be provided to schools and DepEd executives, while research will also be conducted on potentially adapting the model in other Southeast Asian countries to benefit a greater number of learners and teachers.

DepEd's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Service (DRRMS) and the Information and Communications Technology Service (ICTS), will lead in facilitating the project, which will be piloted in 16 schools divisions of the National Capital Region (NCR). In its third year, the program will be rolled out in a second region and will start the preparation for its nationwide scale-up.

Prudence Foundation, the community investment arm of British life insurer Pru Life UK and one of the main drivers of the project, recognizes that education is key to mitigating risk and contributing to early recovery, and aims to make communities safer, more secure, and more resilient by addressing key issues in education, health, and safety.

“Over the last five years, we are proud to have been supporting the Safe Schools program here in the Philippines, supported by DepEd. We are pleased to continue our partnership with DepEd and Save the Children, and hope this project will further empower Filipino children, teachers, and the community to reduce their vulnerability from natural disasters,” Marc Fancy, Executive Director of Prudence Foundation, said.

“We are grateful to DepEd for giving us another platform to reinforce our commitment of helping secure the future of communities, especially the children,” Pru Life UK President and CEO Antonio De Rosas, also a board trustee of Prudence Foundation, added.

The program is estimated to potentially benefit some 20.9 million learners (approximately 10.6 million girls and 10.3 million boys) in close to 47,000 schools across the 17 regions in the Philippines.

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